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THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING.

VOL. I.



Robert Browning.

Leipzig : Neumann, Neudamm, Tauschen.

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING.

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VOL. I.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY—
LURIA—CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY—
MEN AND WOMEN.

WITH THE PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1872.

CONTENTS.

SOUL'S TRAGEDY	7
URIA	45
HRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY	109
EN AND WOMEN	189

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT FIRST,

BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE:

AND ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE.

London, 1846.

PERSONS.

LUITOLFO and EULALIA, betrothed lovers.

CHIAPPINO, their friend.

OGNIBEN, the Pope's Legate.

Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. Place, FAENZA.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

Inside LUITOLFO's house. CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast falling,
And 'twas scarce sunset . . . had the ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. " That's good!

Eu. You laugh?

Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own;
And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke:
—Counting, you see, as "nothing" the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine

In silence: well, go, silence with the rest
Of the world's good! What can I say, shall serve?

Eu. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit!

Ch. How a cloud?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say?

Ch. My God, were 't not for thee!

Eu. Ay, God remains
Even did men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so!
Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man?
I, now—the homeless friendless penniless
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,—
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage
And all our townsfolk's equanimity—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee! It is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know.
But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim thou! Give me truth—truth, power to speak
—And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth! Or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, may approve?

Eu. Ah, well—
Keep silence then, Chiappino!

Ch. You would hear,
You shall now,—why the thing we please to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service—and no more.
I was born here, so was Luitolfo; both
At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.
“Why?” asks the world. “Because,” replies the world
To its complacent self, “these playfellows,
“Who took at church the holy-water drop
“Each from the other’s finger, and so forth,—
“Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
“Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
“Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
“A happy-tempered bringer of the best
“Out of the worst; who bears with what’s past cure,
“And puts so good a face on ’t—wisely passive
“Where action’s fruitless, while he remedies
“In silence what the foolish rail against;
“A man to smooth such natures as parade
“Of opposition must exasperate;
“No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
“Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
“At lucky junctures; one who won’t forego
“The after-battle work of binding wounds,
“Because, forsooth he’d have to bring himself
“To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!”
—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch. I thought

You would be readier with the other half
Of the world's story, my half! Yet, 'tis true,
For all the world does say it. Say your worst!
True, I thank God, I ever said "you sin,"
When a man did sin: if I could not say it,
I glared it at him; if I could not glare it,
I prayed against him; then my part seemed over.
God's may begin yet: so it will, I trust.

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we?

Ch. What's "me" ?

That you use well or ill? It's man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!
Here's our Faenza birthplace; they send here
A provost from Ravenna: how he rules,
You can at times be eloquent about.
"Then, end his rule!"—"Ah yes, one stroke does that!
"But patience under wrong works slow and sure.
"Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,
"Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah—
"Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
"Some human sympathy which, once excite,
"And all the lump were leavened quietly:
"So, no more talk of striking, for this time!"
But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
These pretty takings-up and layings-down
Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.
Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, will you?
Diversify your tactics, give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
While we die in our misery patient deaths?

We all are outraged 'then, and I the first:
I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
Each beck and bend, each . . all you do and are,
I hate!

Eu. We share a common censure, then.
'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?
Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,
(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)
What have I got to be so grateful for?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino!

Ch. Shame
Fall presently on who deserves it most!
—Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband: well—
I loved you.

Eu. Hold!

Ch. You knew it, years ago.
When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
The people's Provost to their heart's content,
—My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
Banishes now because he cannot bear,—
You knew . . but you do your parts—my part, I:
So be it! You flourish, I decay: all's well.

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault's there?
Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire

Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst
 Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
 Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
 Eulalia, truce with toying for this once!
 A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
 For the last time—why, what's to fear from me?
 You knew I loved you!

Eu.

Not so, on my faith!

You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
 See how your words come from you in a crowd!
 Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
 In all that challenges respect and love:
 Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
 I say all this by fascination, sure:
 I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen!
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
 Luitolfo pities. . .

Ch.

—You too pity? Do!

But hear first what my wrongs are; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
 Was 't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As next contrive some way to win them—which
 To do, an age seemed far too little—for, see!
 We all aspire to heaven; and there is heaven
 Above us: go there! Dare we go? no, surely!
 How dare we go without a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for heaven? Even so,
 I dared not speak: the greater fool, it seems!
 Was 't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 But I must have, beside, the very man

Those slight free loose and incapacious soul
 gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
 —Must have him load me with his benefits
 or fortune's fiercest stroke?

Eu. Justice to him
 That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
 Justice for you! Did he once call those acts
 simple friendship—bounties, benefits?

Ch. No: the straight course had been to call them so
 then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
 hampered, free as he to win the prize
 both sought. But "the gold was dross," he said
 He loved me, and I loved him not: why spurn
 A trifle out of superfluity?

He had forgotten he had done as much."
 So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
 To take him at his word, there stood by you
 My benefactor; who might speak and laugh
 And urge his nothings, even banter me
 before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream!
 Let's wake: your husband . . . how you shake at that
 Good—my revenge!

Eu. Why should I shake? What force
 forces me to be Luitolfo's bride?

Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing forces you.
 No gratitude, no liking of the eye
 Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
 of habit—here so many times he came,
 so much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
 that pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
 Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table;
 He spoke a good word to the Provost here,
 Held me up when my fortunes fell away

—It had not looked so well to let me drop—
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a
friend.

But one grows tired of seeing, after^e the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me. I could not change: you know the rest
I've spoke my mind too fully out, by chance,
This morning to our Provost; so, ere night
I leave the city on pain of death. And now
On my account there's gallant intercession
Goes forward—that's so graceful;—and anon
He'll noisily come back: "the intercession
"Was made and fails; all's over for us both
"Tis vain contending; I would better go."
And I do go—and straight to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that permits
His visage to repair the natural bland
Economy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—you, with I
He with himself, and all of you with me
—"Who," say the citizens, "had done far better
"In letting people sleep upon their woes,
"If not possessed with talent to relieve them
"When once awake;—but then I had," they'll say,
"Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
"In what I did; and as I seem content
"With ruining myself, why, so should they be."
And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil, when he gets them speedily!
Why does not your Luitolfo come? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then?

Chiappino!

Never?

Never.

That's sad. Say what I might,
 there was no help from being sure this while
 I loved me. Love like mine must have
 sought: no river starts but to some sea.
 Had you loved me, I could soon devise
 the specious reason why you stifled love,
 the fancied self-denial on your part,
 which made you choose Luitolfo; so, excepting
 in the wide condemnation of all here,
 a woman. Well, the other dream may break!
 How any heart, as mine loved you,
 mine, though in the vilest breast 'twere lodged,
 would, I think, be forced to love again:
 there's no right nor reason in the world.
 "If you knew," say you,—but I did not know.
 'Tis where you're blind, Chiappino!—a disease
 if I may remove, I'll not repent
 coming to. You cannot, will not, see
 me but in every circumstance,
 we are just now indignant at,
 as we.

I should be? . . . that, again
 my friend, my country and my love,
 as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

As we.

Now, I'll say something to remember.
 'Tis in nature for the stable laws
 beauty and utility—Spring shall plant,
 Autumn garner to the end of time:

Exit Brownine 1.

I trust in God—the right shall be the right
 And other than the wrong, while he endures:
 I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
 The outward and the inward, nature's good,
 And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
 Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.—
 A curse—God bears with them, well may
 But I—protest against their claiming me.
 I simply say, if that's allowable,
 I would not (broadly) do as they have done.
 —God curse this townful of born slaves, bred s
 Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse
 Whoever loves, above his liberty,
 House, land or life! and . . . [*A knocking witho*
 —bless my her

Luitolfo!

Eu. How he knocks!

Ch.

The peril, lady!

"Chiappino, I have run a risk—a risk!
 "For when I prayed the Provost (he's my friend
 "To grant you a week's respite of the sentence,
 "That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself
 "He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged
 "And fright of that drove all else from my
 "Here's a good purse of *scudi*: off with you
 "Lest of that shrug come what God only knows
 "The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I
 "Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb,
 "Whose double taxes you appealed against,
 "In discomposure at your ill-success
 "Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!
 "Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
 "Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my

—Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous friend?

[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments disordered.]

Eu. Luitolfo! Blood?

Lui. There's more—and more of it!
Eulalia—take the garment! No—you, friend!
You take it and the blood from me—you

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you? where's the wound?

Ch. "Who," say you?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet!
The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,
And this comes of it. Miserable hound!
This comes of temporizing, as I said!
Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks!
Now see my way! As God lives, I go straight
To the palace and do justice, once for all!

Luit. What says he?

Ch. I'll do justice on him.

Luit. Him?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I've just killed him.

Eu. Oh, my God!

Luit. My friend, they're on my trace; they'll have
me—now!

They're round him, busy with him: soon they'll find
le's past their help, and then they'll be on me!
hiappino, save Eulalia! I forget . . .

Were you not bound for . . .

Ch. Lugo?

Luit. Ah—yes—yes!

That was the point I prayed of him to change.

Tell, go—be happy! Is Eulalia safe?

They're on me!

Ch. 'Tis through me they reach you, then!
 Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms—that's right!
 Now tell me what you've done; explain how you
 That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
 Could bring yourself . . .

What was peace for, Chiappino?
 I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,
 Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days
 Were just the prelude to a day like this.
 I cried "You call me 'friend': save my true friend!
 "Save him, or lose me!"

Ch. But you never said
 You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. —"Would so order it
 "You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;
 I poured my heart's store of indignant words
 Out on him: then—I know not! He retorted,
 And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
 He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck . . .
 Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!
 The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
 The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell,
 Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
 Much to yourself; believe not, all the world
 Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Ch. And you?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!
 This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows

—y path of flight and place of refuge—see—
 Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,
 Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!
 Put on the cloak. His people have to fetch
 A compass round about. There's time enough
 Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make
 For Lugo . . nay, he hears not! On with it—
 The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
 He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must—
 Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge?

Luit.

I know.

• *Ch.* Well, there—you are not frightened? all my route
 Is traced in that: at Venice you escape
 Their power. Eulalia, I am master here!

*[Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who
 complies mechanically.]*

In time! Nay, help me with him—so! He's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance, all
 know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
 As our accomplice.

Ch. •

Mere accomplice? See!

[Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.]

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,
 Or one of these?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

• *Ch.* Die for him.

Eu. Well done! *[Shouts increase.]*

Ch. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent; I must speak: or sing—

How natural to sing now!

Eu.

Hush and pray!

We are to die; but even I perceive
 'Tis not a very hard thing so to die.
 My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,
 Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
 With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth
 Each evening after that wild son of hers,
 To track his thoughtless footstep through the streets:
 How easy for them both to die like this!
 I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds! They pass the gate?
 Yes!—No!—

One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What cries!

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
 One might speak there!

Eu. List, list!

Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost!

The Populace [speaking together.] 'Twas Chiappino,
 friends!

Our saviour! The best man at last as first!
 He who first made us feel what chains we wore,
 He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
 He at last saves us—our best citizen!

—Oh, have you only courage to speak now?

My eldest son was christened a year since
 "Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!

The city's in our hands. The guards are fled.

Do you, the cause of all, come down—come up—
 Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,

Whate'er rewards you! • Choose your own reward!
 The peril over, its reward begins!
 Come and harangue us in the market-place!

Eu. Chiappino?

Ch. • Yes —I understand your eyes!
 You think I should have promptlier disowned
 This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
 In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,
 So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
 To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
 We easily shall make him full amends:
 And meantime—if we save them as they pray,
 And justify the deed by its effects?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured!
 All's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens!

ACT II.

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

1st Bystander (to LUIT.) You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino!

Luit. He the new Provost?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people,

according to established custom: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3rd. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop. He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death

in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* •Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha!

Luit. [*Aside.*] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantries! I know Chiappino better.

1st. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memor-

able. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogaiben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes*," and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den

of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see? I recognise him there!

3rd. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—“And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. “Oh, are you there?” quoth Chiappino: “Ay, in that, I agree,” returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—“whereas what right,” asked he,

"has any man to wish to be superior to another?"—whereat, "Ah, sir," answers the Legate, "this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than

his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!" And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luit. And the result is . .

1st. Why that, a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. (withdrawing a little.) I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge: what could I else? But if, this they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and use more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a

deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me (turn and see it) the old Provost's house to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the

un goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding that so many and so various loves, are all united in the love of a woman,—manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author!—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away,—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts? By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say — not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!"—for a favour done him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he

would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered.—To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain: though I war-

rant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Ch. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence,—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and

view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable?—“Contradictions? Of course there were,” say you!

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply?

Ugni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute

in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving"—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should propor-

tionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, “So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action.” I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only: but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them: though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you! That is the generous way. Cry—“Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go!” The first time a poor devil,

who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, "Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!"—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as "Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require!" Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this; that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogni. Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatto the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatto pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty, already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatto's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do

something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatto we were talking of! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till at last the man fell senseless: not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Hal

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all! My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo. [*coming forward.*] I!

All. Luitolfo!

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiap-

pino; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text, "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo! Still, silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand: it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the

whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now —(ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four*-and-twenty leaders of revolts.

L U R I A.

A TRAGEDY.

I DEDICATE

HIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY

TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET;

“WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:”

IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST

WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN

A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

London, 1846.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.

HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.

PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's Chief Officer.

BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.

JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.

TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.

DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

TIME, 14—.

SCENE.—LURIA'S *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

L U R I A.

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary*; PUCCIO *standing by*.

Brac. [to Puc.] Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puc. Not I;

Luria, the captain.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "In an hour, the battle."

[To Puc.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,

And see if very much of your report

Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.

Does this instruct the Signory aright

How army stands with army?

Puc. [taking the paper.] All seems here:

—That Luria, seizing with our city's force

The several points of vantage, hill and plain,

Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,

And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,

Must, in the battle he delivers now,

Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac.

So sure?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too?

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand."

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir:
 So, while my secretary ends his task,
 Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
 To post with it to Florence!

Puc. [returning the paper.] All seems here;
 Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report!
 Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
 And Luria's hastening at the city's call
 To save her, as he only could, no doubt;
 Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
 Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you:
 Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
 Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
 No youngster am I longer, to my cost;
 Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
 And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
 As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
 Had never met in any man before,
 I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
 But now, this last report and I have done—
 So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
 'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the trade"
 Subscribed with, "True, for once rash counsel's best.
 "This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
 "This boy to whose untried sagacity,
 "Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
 "The charge to save her,—justifies her choice;
 "In no point has this stranger failed his friends:
 "Now praise!" I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [to the Sec.] Write, "Puccio, superseded in the
 charge,
 "By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
 "And no reward our Signory can give

"Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully."
Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers!

[PUCCIO goes.

Brac. [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the
paper into shreds.]

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit contempt
This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
Spit properly at what men term their skill!—)
Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.
With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
Such points of vantage in our hands, and such,
Lucca still off the stage, too,—all's assured:
Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
That Luria's trial end and sentence pass!

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Ay, Lapo?

Sec. If you trip, I fall;

'Tis in self-interest I speak—

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo! Nay!

When did I say pure love's impossible?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,

Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Where all your old acquaintances may see:

You'd die for me, I should not be surprised.

Now then!

Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself!

Step after step, the Signory and you

Tread gay till this tremendous point's to pass;

Robert Browning. I.

Which, pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,—
 Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire.
 Or too delicious may not prove the pride
 Of this long secret trial you dared plan,
 Dare execute, you solitary here,
 With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
 Who think themselves your lords, such slaves are they?
 If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
 Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
 And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
 On the best minute of his brightest day,
 From that adoring army at his back,
 Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
 Into the dark you beckon Luria. . .

Brac.

Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
 We of the other craft and mystery,
 May we not smile demure, the danger past?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
 At watch and ward? Where's danger on your part,
 With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
 'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world?
 If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
 Should have been really guiltless after all?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that?

Sec.

Here I sit, your scribe

And in and out goes Luria, days and nights;
 This Puccio comes; the Moor his other friend,
 Husain; they talk—all that's feigned easily;
 He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
 Reads, orders, counsels:—but he rests sometimes,—
 I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
 On the lynx-skins, yonder; hold his bared black arms

Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh
 When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
 And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
 That man believes in Florence, as the saint
 Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Brac.

How strange!

You too have thought that!

Sec.

Do but you think too,

And all is saved! I only have to write,
 "The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last;
 "Bury it" . . . so I write the Signory . . .
 "Bury this trial in your breast for ever,
 "Blot it from things or done or dreamed about!
 "So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
 "With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
 "As if no meteoric finger hushed
 "The doomed-word just on the destroyer's lip,
 "Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight."

Brac. [*looks to the wall of the tent.*] Did he draw that?

Sec.

With charcoal, when the watch

Made the report at midnight; Lady Domizia
 Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember;
 That is his fancy how a Moorish front
 Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
 And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec.

She is sent the spy

Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him:
 Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
 Is surely safe. What shall I write?

Brac.

I see—

A Moorish front, nor of such ill design!
 Lapò, there's one thing plain and positive;

Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace return,
Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Should sink its point before the statist's pen,
And the calm head replace the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own, such falls the natural end,
And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Declare, "The foreigner, one not my child,
"Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
"The glory, then descend into the shame;
"So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
"And punishment the easier task for me:"
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No past with us, no future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.
The charges here, they may be true or false:

—What is set down? Errors and oversights,
A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now;
Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
She who remembering her whole House's fall,
That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria (poor device
As plain) the instrument of her revenge!
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
Weigh with me less than least; as nothing weigh.
Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go:
On what I know must be, yet while I live
Shall never be, because I live and know.
Brute-force shall not rule Florence! Intellect
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—
But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up!
Till the good come—'twas intellect that ruled,
Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field
The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe

To show against 'us in our market-place,
 Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear
 (Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
 When all was done they frightened nobody)
 Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
 With our own warrant and allowance. No!
 The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
 In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
 To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
 Well then, to perish for a single fault,
 Let that be simple justice!—There, my Lapo!
 A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body:
 Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come!

[LURIA, *who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at the close of the last phrase, now advancing.*

And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Brac. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?
 I said it needs must be a busy moment
 For one like you; that you were now i' the thick
 Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
 What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch!
 I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Lur. See your dispatch, your last, for the first time?
 Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
 He would be forced to set about another,
 In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
 To mention that important circumstance.
 So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
 Do not send this!

Brac. And wherefore?

Lur. These Lucchese

Are not arrived—they never will arrive!
 And I must fight to-day, arrived or not
 And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure:
 And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
 But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
 To look upon my battle from the hills,
 Like a late moon, of use to nobody!
 And I must break my battle up, send forth,
 Surround on this side, hold in check on that.
 Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
 You make me send for fresh instructions home,
 —Incompleteness, incompleteness?

Brac.

Ah, we scribes!

Why, I had registered that very point,
 The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
 As a most happy fortune; both at once
 Were formidable: singly faced, each falls.

Lur. So, no great battle for my Florentines!
 No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
 For all of them, the simple as the wise,
 Old, young, alike, that do not understand
 Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
 By which we prove retreat may be success,
 Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain:
 They want results—as if it were their fault!
 And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
 Will not be able now to simply say
 “Your servant has performed his task—enough!
 “You ordered, he has executed: good!
 “Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
 “Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,
 “Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo's shade!”
 No, you will have to argue and explain,

Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese!

Dom. Well you will triumph for the past enough,
Whatever be the present chance; no service
Falls to the ground with Florence: she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah Braccio, you know Florence! Will she,
think you,
Receive one . . . what means "fittingly receive"?
—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none:
And yet Domizia promises so much!

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.
I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best captain's place.

Lur. That, my reward? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!
And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—
Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee.
That was my calling, there was my true place!
I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye! They give me you:
But do you cross me, set me half to work?
I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once!
Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Brac. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon:
Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast!

I wonder, do you guess why I delay *
 Involuntarily the final blow
 As long as possible? Peace follows it!
 Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
 Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
 As if a spell broke, all resumed, each art
 You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.
 'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
 The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
 The walls are peopled by the painter's brush;
 The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.
 The present noise and trouble have retired
 And left the eternal past to rule once more;—
 You speak its speech and read its records plain,
 Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your
 friend:

But Luria—where will then be Luria's place?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that past's own sake,
 Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
 By saving all that went before from wreck,
 Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your
 streets,
 Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,
 So different, so new, so beautiful—
 Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
 The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
 And shepherd-pipes come into use again?
 For very lone and silent seems my East
 In its drear vastness: still it spreads, and still
 No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
 Not ever more!—Well, well, to-day is ours!
Dom. [*to BRAC.*] Should he not have been one of us?

Lur.

Oh, no!

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
 Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
 Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
 The boundless unrest of the savage heart!
 The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
 Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;
 Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile:
 Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
 In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
 'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies.
 Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever!
 Your placid heads still find rough hands new work;
 Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of mine:
 And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
 Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio!
 You hold my strength; 'twere best dispose of it:
 What you created, see that you find food for—
 I shall be dangerous else!

Brac.

How dangerous, sir?

Lur. There are so many ways, Domizia warns me,
 And one with half the power that I possess,
 Grows very formidable! Do you doubt?
 Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom.

While we talk,
 Morn wears; we keep you from your proper place,
 The field.

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more;
 My part is done, and Puccio's may begin:
 I cannot trench upon his province longer
 With any face.—You think yourselves so safe?
 Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
 One could . .

Dom. A trumpet!

Lur. My Lucchese at rast!
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands! Your leave!

[*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness characterized
By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself!
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes: and how worthy note, that these same
great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course!
The statist finds it natural to lead
The mob who might as easily lead him—
The captain marshals troops born skilled in war—
Statist and captain verily believe!
While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking now,
That I shall in this very letter write
What none of you are able! To it, Lapo!

[*DOMIZIA goes.*]

This last, worst, all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
Convinces me; the past was no child's play:
It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
All's mere dissimulation—to remove
The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
The utmost danger was at hand. Is't written?

Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe.—
I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
And presently will work, so, meantime, plays:
Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [*after a pause.*] The sword! At best, the
soldier, as he says,
In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men!—To Florence with each letter!

ACT II.

NOON. •

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy
heart
Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead: yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside

A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thy noblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth:
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its colour whether false or no!
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
Cry, "Florence was all falseness, so, false here!"
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
The city wedded to the wickedness.

None stood by them as I by Luria stand.
 So, when the stranger cheated of his due
 Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
 Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
 For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
 Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!
 He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp
 Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old!

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope?
 'Tis Lucca?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely!
 Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom. Whom I withdraw before; tho' if I lingered
 You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
 The overtaking night brings such reward!
 And where will then be room for me? Yet, praised,
 Remember who was first to promise praise,
 And envy those who also can perform! [*Goes.*]

Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans?—

Hus. In the camp;
 A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
 On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good;
 A man I seem as I had seen before:
 Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him! This will prove the last delay.

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on!
 Thou heardest what the grave woman said but now:
 To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear;
 But stop not therefore: hear it, and go on!

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
 They round me in the ears with, all day long!

All that, I never take for earnest, friend!
Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors!
But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
That, we shall get?

Hus. It is too cold an air.
Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist:
Where is he now? So, I trust none of them.

Lur. Truly?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.
They use thee.

Lur. And I feel it, Husain! yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature; where its sole use seems
To fight with and keep off an adverse force
As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws:
Inside, they know not what to do with me.
Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since am prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not speak—
Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, "The work rewards!
"I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
"So may it prove!—meanwhile 'tis best I go,
"Go carry safe my memories of you all
"To other scenes of action, newer lands."—
Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief

They would not easily have tired of me.
 You think this hard to say?

Hus. Say or not say,
 So thou but go, so they but let thee go!
 This hating people, that hate each the other,
 And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
 Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
 Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
 And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm;
 While any creature of a better blood,
 They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
 And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
 Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
 See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
 Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
 As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
 Who hates him most! But thou, the friend of all,
 . . Come out of them!

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now!

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend! [*Goes.*]

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
 Their perfect use in him; just so the brutes
 Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
 When change is in the elements at work,
 Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
 But here,—he takes the distant chariot-wheel
 For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
 The finer traits of cultivated life
 For treachery and malevolence: I see!

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message! I but wait your
 message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture
 For truce?—I would not, for your General's sake,
 You spoke of truce: a time to fight is come,
 And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
 His honest soldier's-name to beat me with,
 Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust!

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You? 'Tis—yes . . Tiburzio!
 You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
 From Puccio, when I threw in succours there!
 Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
 Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost!
 You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
 Of water reeds—the plume being hewn away;
 While I drove down my battle from the heights,
 I saw with my own eyes!

Tib. And you are Luria
 Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
 In error of the battle-signal's sense,
 Back safely to me at the critical time—
 One of a hundred deeds. I know you! Therefore
 To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio!

Tib. Luria, you know the peril imminent
 On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
 Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
 The rage of her implacablest of foes
 From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
 Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.
 You have so plainly here the best of it,
 That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
 How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
 How truly formidable by despair.

Still, probabilities should have their weight:
 The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance
 You win this battle. Wherefore say I this?
 To be well apprehended when I add,
 This danger absolutely comes from you.
 Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
 I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
 Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib. Even so.
 Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
 With all your present nobleness of soul,
 No question, what I must communicate
 Would not detach you from her.

Lur. Me, detach?

Tib. Time urges. You will ruin presently
 Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
 You think you know. I have from time to time
 Made prize of certain secret missives sent
 From Braccio here, the Commissary, home:
 And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
 The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
 Your trial occupies the Signory;
 They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
 When men at home inquire into the acts
 Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
 Brief, they are Florentines? You, saving them,
 Seek but the sure destruction saviours find.

Lur. Tiburzio!

Tib. All the wonder is of course.
 I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
 Only to loyally apprise—scarce that,
 This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,

As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence! •

Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service,
Her own affair; reward—there's no reward!
But you are bound by quite another tie.
Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa; 'tis as fair a city
You war against, as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts:
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale,—
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
And all begins again. Break seal and read!
At least let Pisa offer for you now!
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity;

The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
As I for Florence . . say my chance were yours!
You read this letter, and you find . . no, no!
Too mad!

Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose
When I have crushed their foe, to crush me: well?

Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike;
As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more: my weak head, they will say,
Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punishment.
Another tenure of obedience, mine!
You are no son of Pisa's: break and read!

Lur. And act on what I read? What act were fit?
If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
—If that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be!
You may be very sage, yet—all the world
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone!
What would the world be worth? Whose love be sure?
The world remains: you are deceived!

Tib. Your hand!

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,
The better: I am left to speak! For me,
This was my duty, nor would I rejoice

If I could help, it misses its effect;
 And after all you will look gallantly
 Found dead here with that letter in your breast.

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once
 And test them ere I answer finally!
 At your arrival let the trumpet sound:
 If mine return not then the wonted cry
 It means that I believe—am Pisa's!

Tib.

Well! [*Goes.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true! My blood
 Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
 If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
 And the wild desert full of foes around,
 I should have broke the bread and given the salt
 Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
 Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
 Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
 Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
 Oh life, the long mutation—is it so?
 Is it with life as with the body's change?
 —Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
 Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,
 Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
 But silently the first gift dies away,
 And though the new stays, never both at once.
 Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
 It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
 As if to punish the ingratitude
 With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
 And learned to look with European eyes.
 Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
 Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Puccio's mouth,
 Domizia's eyes reject the searcher: yes!

For on their calm sagacity I lean,
Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
Yes, that is better—that is best of all!
Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go.
Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
Betrays its step into the pathless drift—
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,
The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
Yes: I trust Florence: Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end: no Lucca? You must fig

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
I am no Florentine?

Dom. It is yourself

Who still are forcing us, importunately,
To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss!—for what I lose in being none!
No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
But would remind you of the stranger's loss
In natural friends and advocates at home,
Hereditary loves, even rivalships
With precedent for honour and reward.
Still, there's a gain, too! If you take it so,
The stranger's lot has special gain as well.
Do you forget there was my own far East
I might have given away myself to, once,
As now to Florence, and for such a gift,

Stood there like a descended deity?
There, worship waits us: what is it waits here?

[Shows the letter.]

See! Chance has put into my hand the means
Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
With payment palpably before me? See!
Here lies my whole reward! Best learn it now
Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
For swordsman's-pay alone,—break seal and read!
In that case, you will find your full desert.

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends!
You need me now, and all the graciousness
This letter can contain will hardly balance
The after feeling that you need no more.
This moment . . oh, the East has use with you!
Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
With the past praise, in a dark corner yet!
How say you? 'Tis not so with Florentines—
Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
Is but a first step to the peace begun:
He who did well in war, just earns the right
To begin doing well in peace, you know:
And certain my precursors,—would not such
Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,
Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
Treachery even. Say that one of you
Surmised this letter carried what might turn
To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice:
What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!
Hurl her own force against the city straight!
And, even at the moment when the foe
Sounded defiance . . .

[*TIBURZIO's trumpet sounds in the distance.*]

Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!
My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench
The obligation you relieve me from,
Still deeper! [*To Puc.*] Sound our answer, I should say,
And thus:—[*tearing the paper.*]—The battle! That
solves every doubt.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

Puccio, as making a report to JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your captain must report the rest;
For, as I say, the main engagement over
And Luria's special part in it performed,
How could subaltern like myself expect
Leisure or leave to occupy the field
And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?
I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
That Luria would detach me and prevent
The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
But no, more honourable proved my post!
I had the august captive to escort
Safe to our camp; some other could pursue,

Fight, and be famous; gentler chance was mine—
Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed!
He's in the tent there.

Jac. Is the substance down?
I write—"The vanguard beaten and both wings
"In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner"—
And now,—“That they fell back and formed again
"On Lucca's coming.” Why then, after all,
’Tis half a victory, no conclusive one?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault—not much!
He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
—There's commonly more prudence; now, he seemed
To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.
By over-concentrating strength at first
Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped:
That's reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon!
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.
[PUCCIO goes.]

There's nothing done but I would do again;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing.
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac. Yes, so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter—true!

Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks:—
 You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
 So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say!
 Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [*to Puc.*] Say, at his pleasure I will see
 Tiburzio!

All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [*to LUR.*] Were I not forewarned
 You would reject, as you do constantly,
 Praise,—I might tell you how you have deserved
 Of Florence by this last and crowning feat:
 But words offend.

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now.
 I want instruction every hour, I find,
 On points where once I saw least need of it;
 And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,
 Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now.
 After a battle half one's strength is gone;
 The glorious passion in us once appeased,
 Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
 All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
 Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
 To me, the stranger: you, no doubt, may know
 Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
 And peradventure I grow nearer you,
 For I, too, want to know and be assured.
 When a cause ceases to reward itself,
 Its friend seeks fresh sustainments; praise is one,
 And here stand you—you, lady, praise me well.
 But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise.
 To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,

Your quick sense looks: you crown and call aright
 The soul o' the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as act,
 Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
 But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,
 —Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he's my judge!
 Was all well, Puccio?

Puc. All was . . . must be well:
 If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
 —No, there's no doubt, we must—all was well done.

Lur. In truth? Still, you are of the trade, my
 Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.
 There's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
 For the all-unestimated sum of pains
 That go to a success the world can see:
 They praise then, but the best they never know
 —While you know! So, if envy mix with it,
 Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
 Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!
 —For nothing's like it; nothing else records
 Those daily, nightly shippings in the dark
 Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
 For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be!
 And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best
 Is still to come. There's one looks on apart
 Whom all refers to, failure or success;
 What's done might be our best, our utmost work,
 And yet inadequate to serve his need.
 Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—
 Well done for us, seems it well done for him!
 His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
 Answers the end? Should he have chosen higher?
 Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought?

Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well!
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all!
And yet . . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak
Is like the turning-moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me!
Well then, one always dreams of friends at home;
And always comes, I say, the turning-point
When something changes in the friendly eyes
That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .
And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
And all is mockery and a maddening show.
You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .
Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well!—
Come now—this battle saves you, all's at end,
Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
Come now, what's done against me, while I speak,
In Florence? Come! I feel it in my blood,
My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
You are betraying me! What is it you do?
Have it your way, and think my use is over—
Think you are saved and may throw off the mask—
Have it my way, and think more work remains
Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not!
Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
But tell me—tell what I refused to know
At noon, lest heart should fail me! Well? That letter:
My fate is sealed at Florence! What is it?

Brac. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.
 It is no novelty for innocence
 To be suspected, but a privilege:
 The after certain compensation comes.
 Charges, I say not whether false or true,
 Have been preferred against you some time since,
 Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
 And which are therefore undergoing now
 The due investigation. That is all.
 I doubt not but your innocence will prove
 Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
 To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
 My whole heart thanks thee!

Puc. [*to BRAC.*] What is "trial," sir?
 It was not for a trial—surely, no—
 I furnished you those notes from time to time?
 I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—
 And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
 And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
 What should assist a—trial, do you say?
 You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
 His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is it?
 The block—wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
 Nor shall I give my own opinion now
 Of what it should be, or is like to be.
 When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
 Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac.

I assert,

Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters, keep the mummery up!
Take all the experiences of all the world,
Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with these—'tis very well!
Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like,
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There's grace in that,—and when the fresh heart breaks,
The new brain proves a ruin, what of them?
Where is the matter of one moth the more
Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
That he's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance!
Florence exists because these pass away.
She's a contrivance to supply a type
Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse;
She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change
And pass away—there's always what upholds,
Always enough to fashion the great show.
As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
Of shapely cloud substantially the same!
A thousand vapours rise and sink again,

Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
 Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
 Under the sun's straight influence: that is well,
 That is worth heaven to hold, and God to bless!
 And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
 Which draws and holds suspended all of us,
 Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
 Differing from each and better than they all.
 And shall she dare to stake this permanence
 On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,
 And its temptations many: let her prove
 Each servant to the very uttermost
 Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
 Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
 Though they deserve it, did she only know!
 —What should she do for these?

Brac. What does she not?
 Say, that she gives them but herself to serve!
 Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,
 When half an hour of sober fancying
 Had shown him step by step the uselessness
 Of strength, exerted for strength's proper sake?
 But the truth is, she did create that strength,
 Draw to the end the corresponding means.
 The world is wide—are we the only men?
 Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
 Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
 Call any man the sole great wise and good!
 But shall we therefore, standing by ourselves,
 Insult our souls and God with the same speech?
 There, swarm the ignoble thousands under him:
 What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?

Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
 Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows!
 She takes me out of all the world as him.
 Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
 The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?

Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way
 To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
 Am I the baited animal that must turn
 And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
 Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!
 Do you indeed remember I stand here
 The captain of the conquering army,—mine—
 With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
 To show for what their names meant when you gave,
 Not what you style them now you take away?
 If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
 And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
 Of victory with this you menace now—
 Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
 My story first, your comment afterward,—
 Will they take, think you, part with you or me?
 If I say—I, the labourer they saw work,
 Ending my work, ask pay, and find my lords
 Have all this while provided silently
 Against the day of pay and proving faith,
 By what you call my sentence that's to come—
 Will friends advise I wait complacently?
 If I meet Florence half way at their head,
 What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
 That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
 And so was saved. "See, Italy," I'll say,
 "The crown of our precautions! Here's a man

"Was far advanced, just touched on the belief
"Less subtle cities had accorded long;
"But we were wiser: at the end comes this!"
And from that minute, where is Luria? Lost!
The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool,
Who thus resents her first probation, flouts
As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privilege
Against suspicion, free where angels fear:
He, for the first inquisitive mother-word,
Must turn, and stand on his defence, forsooth!
Reward? You will not be worth punishment!

Lur. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have
lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,
Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
Reported me—how could you otherwise!
Ay?—and what dropped from you, just now, moreover?
Your information, Putcio?—Did your skill,
Your understanding sympathy approve
Such a report of me? Was this the end?
Or is even this the end? Can I stop here?
You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,
The heart to see with, past man's brain and eyes,
.. I cannot fathom why you should destroy
The unoffending one, you call your friend—
Still, lessoned by the good examples here
Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask—
Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
Than your friend's profit—in all those instances

Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—
All I remember now for the first time!

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
Sister of Porzio and of Berto both:
So, have foreseen all that has come to pass,
I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
Must needs mistrust a stranger's—dealing them
Punishment, would deny him his reward.
And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
He would not bear, but live and fight against—
Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them! All these against one foreigner!
And all this while, where is in the whole world
To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio. [*who has entered unseen during the preceding dialogue.*] Here!

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
I live for Pisa; she's not lost to-day
By many chances—much prevents from that!
Her army has been beaten, I am here,
But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance!
I rather would see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even by you;
The example of a traitor's happy fortune
Would bring more evil in the end than good;—
Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself!
I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
My charge,—the highest office, sword and shield!
You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
Your army, give her calumny that ground—
Nor bring one soldier: be you all we gain!
And all she'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,
And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.

Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
 A proverb and a bye-word in all mouths!
 Go you to Pisa! Florence is my place—
 Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
 To Pisa!

Dom. Ah my Braccio, are you caught?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and good citizen
 Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
 Ready as fit, to serve in this event—
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—
 Through me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, through me, from him who held it late!
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours:
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 'The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—
 Slights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear:
 And ever you did bear and bow the head!
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam; your footsteps kept the track
 Thro' dark and doubt: take all the light at once!
 Trial is over, consummation shines;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command!

Puc. No, no . . I dare not! I am grateful, glad;
 But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—
 And he's my captain—this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune: think again!
 The sentence is not even passed, beside!
 I dare not . . where's the soldier could!

Lur. Now, Florence—
 Is it to be?—You will know all the strength

O' the savage—to your neck the proof must go?
You will prove the brute nature? Ah, I see!
The savage plainly is impassible—
He keeps his calm way through insulting words,
Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which
Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense.
But if he stolidly advance, march mute
Without a mark upon his callous hide,
Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is:
It falls before him, or he dies in his course.
I kept my course through past ingratitude:
I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you: I bore and kept my course.
Now real wrong fronts me: see if I succumb!
Florence withstands me?—I will punish her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do:
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks!
Go; you are free: join Lucca! I suspend

All further operations till to-night.
Thank you, and for the silence most of all!
[To BRAC.] Let my complacent bland accuser go,
Carry his self-approving head and heart
Safe through the army which would trample him
Dead in a moment at my word or sign!
Go, sir, to Florence; tell friends what I say—
That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them!
[To DOM.] You, lady,—you have black Italian eyes!
I would be generous if I might . . . oh, yes—
For I remember how so oft you ~~seemed~~
Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
Which Florence finds God built between us both.
Alas, for generosity! this hour
Asks retribution: bear it as you may,
I must—the Moor—the savage,—pardon you!
Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth!

•ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria will do? Ah, 'tis yours, fair sir,
You and your subtle-witted master's part,
To tell me that; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station: I observe
The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there's your fault!
You cannot push them, and, the first move made,
I lean back and study what the next shall be,
In confidence that, when 'tis fixed upon,

You find just where you left them, blacks and whites:
Men go on moving when your hand's away.
You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
This whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build,
Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
With Luria in his ordinary mind.
But now, oppression makes the wise man mad:
How do I know he will not turn and stand
And hold his own against you, as he may?
Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa—well,—
Then, even if all happen to your wish,
Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'twas an oversight,
Not waiting till the proper warrant came:
You could not take what was not ours to give.
But when at night the sentence really comes,
Our city authorizes past dispute
Luria's removal and transfers the charge,
You will perceive your duty and accept!

Puc. Accept what? muster-rolls of soldiers' names?
An army upon paper?—I want men,
The hearts as well as hands—and where's a heart
But beats with Luria, in the multitude
I come from walking through by Luria's side?
You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
Head-like, upon their trunk; one heart feeds both,
They feel him there, live twice, and well know why.
—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
All was your act: another might have served—
There's peradventure no such dearth of heads—
But you choose Luria—so, they grew one flesh,

And now, for nothing they can understand,
Luria removed, off is to roll the head;
The body's mine—much I shall do with it!

Jac. That's at the worst.

Puc.

No—at the best, it is!

Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side.
Only we two with Luria in the camp
Are left that keep the secret? You think that?
Hear what I know: from rear to van, no heart
But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence; they might pass—
No breast but gladlier beat when free of such!
Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-despite
To still continue second in command!

Puc. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate!
Your tricks succeed with me too well for that!
I am as you have made me, live and die
To serve your end! a mere trained fighting-back
With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,
For my life's rule and ordinance of God!
I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
And fight against one better than myself,
Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth.
That, you may count on!—just as hitherto

I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
 Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote,—
 All because Luria superseded me—
 Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
 Mounted above me to its proper place!
 What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
 The cordial brother's-bearing? This was clear—
 I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
 And so must keep complaining like a fool!
 Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say!
 You neither play your puppets to the end,
 Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
 Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
 As might console them for their altered rank.
 Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
 For Luria, and here's all your pet deserves!
 Of what account, then, is your laughing-stock?
 One word for all: whatever Luria does,
 —If backed by his indignant troops he turn,
 Revenge himself, and Florence go to ground,—
 Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
 He pardon you, simply seek better friends,
 Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for change
 —And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief,
 Dare fight against a man such fools call false,
 Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights me,—
 Whichever way we win, he wins for worth,
 For every soldier, for all true and good!
 Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this!

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou?—For they are gone! The world
 lies bare
 Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen

Like what it is, now Florence goes away!
 Thou livest now, with men art man again!
 Those Florentines were all to thee of old;
 But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each,
 There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes!
 Saw'st thou?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. Then, hold thy course, my king!
 The years return. Let thy heart have its way:
 Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
 Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
 Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?
 Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends
 Once at their occupation! Ere ye know,
 The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
 Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
 So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
 Our common earth is tethered up and down,
 Over and across—"here shalt thou move," they cry!

Lur. Ay, Husain!

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside!
 So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
 Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
 All in one tale, all singing the same song,
 How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
 Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
 Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
 With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou art lost—
 A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as they?
 Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
 Look up to it! Why down they pull thy neck,
 Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
 Without their priests that needs must glove it first,

Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip.
 Love woman! Why, a very beast thou art!
 Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain!

Hus. Ay but, spoiling all,
 For all, else true things, substituting false,
 That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!
 Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
 Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
 And class them and allow them place and play
 So far, no farther—unabashed the while!
 Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
 Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
 And never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
 Oh, that is commendable, just and right!
 “Come over,” say they, “have the honour due
 “In living out thy nature! Fight thy best:
 “It is to be for Florence, not thyself!
 “For thee, it were a horror and a plague;
 “For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
 “How all is changed: the fire that fed on earth
 “Now towers to heaven!”—

Lur. And what sealed up so long
 My Husain's mouth?

Hus. Oh friend, oh lord—for me,
 What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
 Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
 Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
 Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live again,
 Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
 Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
 To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
 If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!

As failing of sustainment from thyself,
—Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim
The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share!
Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen: second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops;
So the few famous men of old combined,
And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew:
Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered many grew in pride
And grudged the station of the elected ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude—
Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence: who can tell
The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, live?
My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
My slender life proves what has passed away.

I lived when they departed; lived to cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger; thou wouldst rise
 And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.
 I have done nothing; all was thy strong bole.
 But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
 Which after holds an aery in its arms,
 And 'twas my care that nought should warp thy spire
 From rising to the height; the roof is reached
 O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky!
 Go on to Florence, Luria! 'Tis man's cause!
 Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread:
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more—
 And while the ignoble past is justified,
 Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,
 The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
 That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
 Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached!
 Man calls thee, God requites thee! All is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at last:
 And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
 Reserves speech—it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.]

Lur. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then!
 Doing the various work of all his friends,
 And answering every purpose save his own.
 No doubt, 'tis well for them to wish; but him—
 After the exploit what were left? Perchance
 A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
 At having brought successfully to bear
 'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,—
 Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength

From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit.
But after!—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage!)—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor!
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so!
Whence grew this? What withdrew her faith from me?
Some cause! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again!
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech:
But what could it have been in word or deed
Thus injured me? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps
My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they?
Why risk the danger? See, what I could do!
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines? The notable revenge,
I meditated! To stay passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose!
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then?
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,

Shall it console me, that my Florentines
 Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
 Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
 At the glad outset? Had they loved me less,
 They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
 And after all, who did the harm? Not they!
 How could they interpose with those old fools
 I' the council? Suffer for those old fools' sakes—
 They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
 About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind
 Out of our proper world, where we can see!
 The sun that guides is closer to us! There—
 There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky!
 Why, there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
 My land, our Florence all about the hills,
 The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
 All have been blest—and yet we Florentines
 With souls intent upon our battle here,
 Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
 Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much—
 Therefore we wronged him! Does he turn in ire
 To burn the earth that cannot understand?
 Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
 His task once ended? Night wipes blame away.
 Another morning from my East shall spring
 And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
 To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
 So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
 Praise the new Luria and forget the old!

[Taking a phial from his breast.]

—Strange! This is all I brought from my own land
 To help me: Europe would supply the rest,
 All needs beside, all other helps save one!

I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
 The natural upbraiding of the loser,
 And then this quiet remedy to seek
 At end of the disastrous day. [*He drinks.*
'Tis sought!

This was my happy triumph-morning: Florence
 Is saved: I drink this, and ere night,—die! Strange!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA and PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this: well,
 Such were my projects for the city's good,
 To help her in attack or by defence.
 Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
 Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change;
 But not a little we provide against
 —If you see clear on every point.

Puc.

Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if you count
 words,

Yet to an understanding ear enough;
 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
 Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
 My elder in command, or threw a doubt
 Upon the very skill, it comforts me
 To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
 Which never failed me: yet, because it seemed
 A stranger's eye might haply note defect
 That skill, through use and custom, overlooks

I have gone into the old cares once more,
 As if I had to come and save again
 Florence—that May—that morning! 'Tis night now.
 Well—I broke off with? . . .

Puc. Of the past campaign
 You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
 For future use.

Lur. True, so . . . but, time—no time!
 As well end here: remember this, and me!
 Farewell now!

Puc. Dare I speak?

Lur. South o' the river—
 How is the second stream called . . . no,—the third?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's-cast from the fording-place
 To the east,—the little mount's name?

Puc. Lupo.

Lur. Ay!
 Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe!

With San Romano, west of Evola,
 San Miniato, Scala, Bompoli,
 Five towers in all,—forget not!

Puc. Fear not me!

Lur. — Nor to memorialize the Council now,
 In the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,
 On the other side by Staggia on the hills,
 Who kept the Sienese at check!

Puc. One word—
 Sir, I must speak! That you submit yourself
 To Florence' bidding, howsoever it prove,
 And give up the command to me—is much,
 Too much, perhaps: but what you tell me now,
 Even will affect the other course you choose—

Poor as it may be, perils even that!
 Refuge you seek at Pisa: yet these plans
 All militate for Florence, all conclude
 Your formidable work to make her queen
 O' the country,—which her rivals rose against
 When you began it,—which to interrupt,
 Pisa would buy you off at any price!
 You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
 With this made perfect and on record?

Lur.

I—

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puc. Where are you going, then? You must decide
 On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
 Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines,
 Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
 To painfully begin the world once more,
 With such a past, as it had never been!
 Where are you going?

Lur.

Not so far, my Puccio,
 But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
 (If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
 Each happy blow you strike for Florence!

Puc.

Ay,

But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
 For see—though nothing's surely known as yet,
 Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.
 If mere suspicion stood for certainty
 Before, there's nothing can arrest the step
 Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
 Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
 And having disbelieved your innocence,
 How can she trust your magnanimity?
 You may do harm to her—why then, you will

And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on?

Lur. One sure friend.

Puc. Potent?

Lur. All-potent.

Puc. And he is apprised?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So!—Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To this, the State's gift, now add yours beside—
That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence good.
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know and praise!

Puc. Though so, men say, "mark what we gain by
change

"—A Puccio for a Luria!"

Lur. * Even so!

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my captain and my lord!
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest for ever!
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops, and there is peace at once!

I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields!
 God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
 On orders, warrants, patents and the like,
 As if there were no glowing eye i' the world,
 To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
 No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats!
 For, see—my doubt, where is it?—fear? 'tis flown!
 And Florence and her anger are a tale
 To scare a child! Why, half-a-dozen words
 Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
 Her error, my past folly—and all's right,
 And you are Luria, our great chief again!
 Or at the worst—which worst were best of all --
 To exile or to death I follow you!

Lur. Thanks, Puccio! Let me use the privilege
 You grant me: if I still command you,—stay!
 Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
 And not successor: let me, as of old,
 Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—
 Still triumph, one for both. There! Leave me now
 You cannot disobey my first command?
 Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
 And what you promised to concert with him!
 Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell!
 You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO goes.]

So, there's one Florentine returns again!
 Out of the genial morning-company,
 One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your command, sir.

Lur.

What, so soon?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts
So, I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me, were a town to take
. . . That is, of old. I am departing hence
Under these imputations; that is nought—
I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger: all the more behoves
That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall: the roots
O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
No root of mine will throb—you understand.
But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now, and punished so—
The Traversari: you know more than I
How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
Both served them and succeeded, in due time;
He knows the way, holds proper documents,
And has the power to lay the simple truth
Before an active spirit, as I count yours:
And also there's Tiburzio, my new friend,
Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the great chivalric soul we know.
I put it to your tact, sir—weren't not well,
—A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
If you who witness, and have borne a share
Involuntarily in my mischance,

Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
To indicate—that is, investigate
The right or wrong of what mischance befell
Those famous citizens, your countrymen?
Nay, you shall promise nothing: but reflect,
And if your sense of justice prompt you—good!
Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied!
For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
I used to hold by the instructed brain,
And move with Braccio as my master-wind;
The heart leads surelier: I must move with you—
As greatest now, who ever were the best.
So, let the last and humblest of your servants
Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
And tender homage by obeying you!

[JACOPO goes.]

Lur. Another!—Luria goes not poorly forth.
If we could wait! The only fault's with time;
All men become good creatures: but so slow!

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more?

Dom. Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'Tis I,
Another woman, you have never known.
Let the past sleep now!

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—

So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
 With nought beyond to live for,—is that reached?—
 Already are new undreamed energies
 Outgrowing under, and extending farther
 To a new object;—there's another world!
 See! I have told the purpose of my life;
 'Tis gained: you are decided, well or ill—
 You march on Florence, or submit to her—
 My work is done with you, your brow declares.
 But—leave you?—More of you seems yet to reach!
 I stay for what I just begin to see. •

Lur. So that you turn not to the past!

Dom.

You trace

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
 Which sought its end and disregarded yours?

Lur. Speak not against your nature: best, each keep
 His own—you, yours—most, now that I keep mine,
 —At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
 God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
 We would confound: the lesser has its use,
 Which, when it apes the greater, is foregone.
 I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine;
 But, punished properly, can end, a Moor.
 Beside, there's something makes me understand
 Your nature: I have seen it.

Dom.

Aught like mine?

Lur. In my own East . . if you would stoop and help
 My barbarous illustration! It sounds ill;
 Yet there's no wrong at bottom: rather, praise.

Dom. Well?

Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw
 The first time, you would doubtless marvel at
 For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.

And though it were a lively moment's shock
Wherein you found the purpose of forked tongues
That seem innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made know such grace requires such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best—
So, take them, good with ill, contentedly,
The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines:
Yet . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East!
How nearer God we were! He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours!
We feel him, nor by painful reason know!
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
All changes at his instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon his world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty? To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it him? So, man breathes nobly there!
And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
While Northern thought is slow and durable,
Surely a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power
And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
Should have remained and turned it to account,

Giving thought's character and permanence
 To the too transitory feeling there—
 Writing God's message plain in mortal words.
 Instead of which, I leave my fated field
 For this where such a task is needed least,
 Where all are born consummate in the art
 I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
 And then, deserting thus my early post,
 I wonder that the men I come among
 Mistake me! There, how all had understood,
 Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
 Fresh instinct to translate them into law!
 Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
 More needful even: who have brought fresh stuff
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
 New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know
 O' the instant, where had been our need of it?
 ---Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
 What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
 All, once revealed but taught us so long since
 That, having mere tradition of the fact,—
 Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
 The early traits all dropped away,—we said
 On sight of faith like yours, "So looks not faith
 "We understand, described and praised before."
 But still, the feat was dared; and though at first
 It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
 Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
 Our slow thought does its work, and all's re-known.
 Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed
 I see not, but no animal revenge,
 No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—

It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
 Traced for me by convention and mistake,
 Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
 Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
 To his own soul, and I will trust him mine!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now,
 And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step.

Lur. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.
 Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
 Southward—

Lur. Toward Florence? Have out instantly . . .
 Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth.
 In—quick—'tis nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio?—not at Pisa?

Tib. I return
 From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
 By such procedure I have served her best.
 A people is but the attempt of many
 To rise to the completer life of one;
 And those who live as models for the mass
 Are singly of more value than they all.

Such man are you, and such a time is this,
That your sole fate concerns a nation more
Than its apparent welfare; and to prove
Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
Imports us far beyond the day's event,
A battle's loss or gain: the mass remains,—
Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
To take its mould, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's having lived.
I might go try my fortune as you bade,
And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done;
But where find Luria for our sons to see?
No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Her full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity, as none else could: I spoke,
And out it shone!

Lur. Ah—until Braccio spoke!

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
His lapse to error, his return to knowledge:
Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,
I whom shame rests with! Yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon when I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end!
'Tis morn approaches! Still you answer not?
Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away;
Our faces, which phantasmal grew and false,
Are all that felt it: they close round you, turn
Themselves now in its complete vanishing.
Speak, Luria! Here begins your true career:
Look up to it! All now is possible,
The glory and the grandeur of each dream.

And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)
—That you would punish Florence!

Hus. [*pointing to LURIA's dead body.*] That is done.

CHRISTMAS-EVE & EASTER-DAY.

FLORENCE, 1850.

CHRISTMAS-EVE & EASTER-DAY.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

1.

Out of the little chapel I burst,
Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Four feet long by two feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside—
I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy; the rain kept driving.
They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving,

Some of them by the main road, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,
—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;—
But the most turned in yet more abruptly
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
Which now the little chapel rallies
And leads into day again,—its priestliness
Lending itself to hide their beastliness
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
That, where you cross the common as I did,
And meet the party thus presided,
“Mount Zion” with Love-lane at the back of it,
They front you as little disconcerted
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
And her wicked people made to mind him,
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
Her umbrella with a mighty report,
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping.
A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
Like a startled horse, at the interloper

(Who humbly knew himself improper,
But could not shrink up small enough)
—Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on
Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I got the same interrogation—

"What, you, the alien, you have ventured
"To take with us, the elect, your station?
"A carer for none of it, a Gallio!"—
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:
I verily fancied the zealous light
(In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.
There was no standing it much longer.
"Good folks," thought I, as resolve grew stronger,
"This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,
"When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
"You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
"And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!
"But still, despite the pretty perfection
"To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
"And, taking God's word under wise protection,
"Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
"And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares,—
"Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,
"If I should choose to cry, as now, 'Shares!'—
"See if the best of you bars me my ration!
"I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
"Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder;
"Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest,

"Supposing I don the marriage vestiment:
"So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,
"And carve me my portion at your quickliest!"
Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
With wizened face in want of soap,
And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
'To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher).
—Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
And found myself in full conventicle,
—To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
Found all assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

• III.

I very soon had enough of it.
The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
No sooner got our friend an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,

(Whene'er 'twas that the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench)
Then he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the book of books to pieces:
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases.
Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt
yours,—

So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief, untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking!

My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it;
So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,
"I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,"
I flung out of the little chapel.

IV.

'There was a lull in the rain, a lull
In the wind too; the moon was risen,
And would have shone out pure and full,
But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
Block on block built up in the West,
For what purpose the wind knows best,
Who changes his mind continually.
And the empty other half of the sky
Seemed in its silence as if it knew
What, any moment, might look through
A chance gap in that fortress massy:—
Through its fissures you got hints
Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
All a-simmer with intense strain
To let her through,—then blank again,
At the hope of her appearance failing.
Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
Shows a narrow path directly across;
'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss—
Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.
I stooped under and soon felt better;
My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
As I walked on, glad to have slipped the fetter.
My mind was full of the scene I had left,

That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
—How this outside was pure and different!
The sermon, now—what a mingled west
Of good and ill! Were either less,
Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly;
But alas for the excellent earnestness,
And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
However to pastor and flock's contentment!
Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
Till how could you know them, grown double their size
In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
Haloed about with the common's damps?
Truth remains true, the fault 's in the prover;
The zeal was good, and the aspiration;
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
Pharaoh received no demonstration,
By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
Apparently his hearers relished it
With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!
These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the Call of them;
And this is their method of bringing about,
By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving and reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell?—)

Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using;
And how it happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek
Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;
And when, next week, I take it back again,
My head will sing to the engine's clack again,
While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stir,
—Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
'Tis the taught already that profits by teaching;
He gets no more from the railway's preaching
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I:
Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous eye on.
Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion,"
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

v.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
Does the selfsame weary thing take place?
The same endeavour to make you believe,
And with much the same effect, no more:
Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing
By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally:
And in this church my faith sprang first!
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,
And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,

I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
—In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, his visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean: God's all, man's nought:
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, "But all is God's"—whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
But able to glorify him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,
Made perfect as a thing of course.
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock,
And, looking to God who ordained divorce
Of the rock from his boundless continent,
Sees, in his power made evident,

Only excess by a million-fold
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
For, note: man's hand, first formed to carry
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,
—Advancing in power by one degree;
And why count steps through eternity?
But love is the ever-springing fountain:
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
For the water's play, but the water-head—
How can he multiply or reduce it? •
As easy create it, as cause it to cease;
He may profit by it, or abuse it,
But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
As power does: be love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but
Love's sum remains what it was before.
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
As seen through power, ever above
All modes which make it manifest,
My soul brought all to a single test—
That he, the Eternal First and Last,
Who, in his power, had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might,—
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
—Would prove as infinitely good;
Would never, (my soul understood,)
With power to work all love desires,
Bestow e'en less than man requires;
That he who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,

(So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)
Would never need that I, in turn,
Should point him out defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
What the meanest human creature needed,
—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
Tracking his way through doubts and fears,
While the stupid earth on which I stay
Suffers no change, but passive adds
Its myriad years to myriads,
Though I, he gave it to, decay,
Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me.
No: love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
And I shall behold thee, face, to face,
O God, and in thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast thou!
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
I shall find as able to satiate
The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimiate,
With this sky of thine, that I now walk under
And glory in thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine—
Be this my way! And this is mine!

VI.

For lo, what think you? suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud-barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West; while, bare and breathless,
North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
Sprang across them and stood steady.
'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white,—
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then, —
Me, one out of a world of men,
Singled forth, as the chance might hap
To another if, in a thunderclap
Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
Some one man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, "Appear!
"Good were it to be ever here.
"If thou wilt, let me build to thee
"Service-tabernacles three,
"Where, forever in thy presence,
"In ecstatic acquiescence,
"Far alike from thriftless learning
"And ignorance's undiscerning,
"I may worship and remain!"
Thus at the show above me, gazing
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
Glutted with the glory, blazing
Throughout its whole mass, over and under,
Until at length it burst asunder
And out of it bodily there streamed,
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground,
Then palely serpentine round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.
He himself with his human hair,
On the narrow pathway, just before.

I saw the back of him, no more—
He had left the chapel, then, as I.
I forgot all about the sky.
No face: only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognise.
I felt terror, no surprise;
My mind filled with the cataract,
At one bound of the mighty fact.
“I remember, he did say
Doubtless, that, to this world’s end, •
Where two or three should meet and pray,
He would be in the midst, their friend;
Certainly he was there with them!”
And my pulses leaped for joy
Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw his very vesture’s hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear;
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
To the salvation of the vest,
“But not so, Lord! It cannot be
“That thou, indeed, art leaving me—
“Me, that have despised thy friends!
“Did my heart make no amends?
“Thou art the love of God—above
“His power, didst hear me place his love,
“And that was leaving the world for thee:
“Therefore thou must not turn from me
“As I had chosen the other part.
“Folly and pride o’ercame my heart.
“Our best is bad, nor bears thy test;
“Still, it should be our very best.

"I thought it best that thou, the spirit,
"Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
"And in beauty, as even we require it—
"Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
"I left but now, as scarcely fitted
"For thee: I knew not what I pitied.
"But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
"What is it to thee, who curest sinning?
"Am I not weak as thou art strong?
"I have looked to thee from the beginning,
"Straight up to thee through all the world
"Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
"To nothingness on either side:
"And since the time thou wast descried,
"Spite of the weak heart, so have I
"Lived ever, and so fain would die,
"Living and dying, thee before!
"But if thou leavest me—"

IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.
When,—have mercy, Lord, on us!
The whole face turned upon me full.
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discoloured web—
So lay I, saturate with brightness.
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,

But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion:
What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals,—
“So he said, so it befalls.
“God who registers the cup
“Of mere cold water, for his sake
“To a disciple rendered up,
“Disdains not his own thirst to slake
“At the poorest love was ever offered:
“And because my heart I proffered,
“With true love trembling at the brim,
“He suffers me to follow him
“For ever, my own way,—dispensed
“From seeking to be influenced
“By all the less immediate ways
“That earth, in worships manifold,
“Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
“The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!”

X.

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
For where am I, in city or plain,
Since I am 'ware of the world again?
And what is this that rises propped
With pillars of prodigious girth?

Is it really on the earth,
This miraculous Dome of God?
Has the angel's measuring-rod
Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
Meted it out,—and what he meted,
Have the sons of men completed?
—Binding, ever as he bade,
Columns in the colonnade
With arms wide open to embrace
The entry of the human race
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building.
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice?
Now I see; it is no dream;
It stands there and it does not seem:
For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
And thus I have read of it in books
Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how these fountains play,
Growing up eternally
Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth!
I, the sinner that speak to you,
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
Both this and more. For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,

As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive!
Men in the chancel, body and nave,
Men on the pillars' architrave,
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth's best endowment
Blends with heaven's; the taper-fires •
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when he praised him)
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when he who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,

As his servant John received the words,
"I died, and live for evermore!"

XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.
"Why sit I here on the threshold-stone,
Left till he return, alone
Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold?"
My reason, to my doubt, replied,
As if a book were opened wide,
And at a certain page I traced
Every record undefaced,
Added by successive years,—
The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.
Yes, I said—that he will go
And sit with these in turn, I know.
Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
Too giddily to guide her limbs,
Disabled by their palsy-stroke
From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies:
And he, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit

To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because himself discerns all ways
Open to reach him: I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the founder's base:
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting his return outside.
—'Twas thus my reason straight replied
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried "What has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
Do these men praise him? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise!
I see the error; but above
The scope of error, see the love.—
Oh, love of those first Christian days!
—Fanned so soon into a blaze,
From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon:
You looked up and he was gone.
Gone, his glory of the pen!

—Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
Bade her scribes abhor the trick
Of poetry and rhetoric,
And exult with hearts set free,
In blessed imbecility
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet
Leaving Sallust incomplete.
Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!
—Love, while able to acquaint her
While the thousand statues yet
Fresh from chisel,^f pictures wet
From brush, she saw on every side,
Chose rather with an infant's pride
To frame those portents which impart
Such unction to true Christian Art.
Gone, music too! The air was stirred
By happy wings: Terpander's bird
(That, when the cold came, fled away)
Would tarry not the wintry day,—
As more-enduring sculpture must.
Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
With which they chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
They glanced a thought above the toes of,
By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
Might have filched her organ-fingering,
Nor chosen rather to set prayings
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
Love was the startling thing, the new;
Love was the all-sufficient too;
And seeing that, you see the rest:
As a babe can find its mother's breast

As well in darkness as in light,
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
True, the world's eyes are open now:
—Less need for me to disallow
Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
Peevish as ever to be suckled,
Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
With intermixture of the rattle,
When she would have them creep, stand steady
Upon their feet, or walk already,
Not to speak of trying to climb.
I will be wise another time,
And not desire a wall between us,
When next I see a church-roof cover
So many species of one genus,
All with foreheads bearing *lover*
Written above the earnest eyes of them;
All with breasts that beat for beauty,
Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
In noble daring, steadfast duty,
The heroic in passion, or in action,—
Or, lowered for sense's satisfaction,
To the mere outside of human creatures,
Mere perfect form and faultless features.
What? with all Rome here, whence to levy
Such contributions to their appetite,
With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
They take, as it were, a padlock, clap it tight
On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
On the glories of their ancient reading,
On the beauties of their modern singing,
On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
On the majesties of Art around them,—

And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
When faith has at last united and bound them,
They offer up to God for a present?
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—
And, only taking the act in reference
To the other recipients who might have allowed it,
I will rejoice that God had the preference.”

XII.

So I summed up my new resolves:
“Too much love there can never be.
And where the intellect devolves
Its function on love exclusively,
I, a man who possesses both,
Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
—Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
That my intellect may find its share.
And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,
And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,
Who, examining the capabilities
Of the block of marble he has to fashion
Into a type of thought or passion,—
Not always, using obvious facilities,
Shapes it, as any artist can,
Into a perfect symmetrical man,
Complete from head to foot of the life-size,
Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—
But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate
A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,
And uses the whole of his block for the bust,
Leaving the mind of the public to finish it,
Since cut it ruefully short he must:
On the face alone he expends his devotion,

He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,
—Saying, 'Applaud me for this grand notion
'Of what a face may be! As for completing it
'In breast and body and limbs, do that, you!'
All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,
A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,
Could man carve so as to answer volition.
And how much nobler than petty cavils,
Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
Some artist of another ambition,
Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,
And believed to begin at the feet was best—
For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!"

XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night!
My heart beat lighter and more light:
And still, as before, I was walking swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On just before me, still to be followed,
•As it carried me after with its motion,
— What shall I say!—as a path were hollowed,
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV.

Alone! I am left alone once more—
(Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)

Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
—Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town!
It may be . . . though which, I can't affirm . . . any
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;
And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort,
Or Göttingen, I have to thank for't!
It may be Göttingen,—most likely.
Through the open door I catch obliquely
Glimpses of a lecture-hall;
And not a bad assembly neither,
Ranged decent and symmetrical
On benches, waiting what's to see there;
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
I also resolve to see with them,
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
The chance of joining in fellowship
With any that call themselves his friends;
As these folks do, I have a notion.
But hist—a buzzing and emotion!
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
Step by step, deliberate
Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.
I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
That sallow virgin-minded studious

Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—
Those blue eyes had survived so much!
While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats,
Was done with, died into a silence;
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,—
He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
And giving his head of hair—a hake
Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—
One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie
When about to impart, on mature digestion,
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
—The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

xv.

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew

The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Commingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source;
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse;
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime,
This Christianity, this lake,
This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst?
So, he proposed inquiring first
Into the various sources whence
This Myth of Christ is derivable;
Demanding from the evidence,
(Since plainly no such life was liveable)
How these phenomena should class?
Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
Or never was at all, or whether
He was and was not, both together—
It matters little for the name,
So the idea be left the same.
Only, for practical purpose' sake,
'Twas obviously as well to take
The popular story,—understanding
How the ineptitude of the time,
And the penman's prejudice, expanding
Fact into fable fit for the clime,
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
Into this myth, this Individuum,—
Which, when reason had strained and abated it
Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,
A Man!—a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour:
Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient

To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant
Something entirely different
From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,
Had yet a meaning quite as respectable:
For, among other doctrines delectable,
Was he not surely the first to insist on
The natural sovereignty of our race?—
Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.
And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
The vesture still within my hand.

XVI.

I could interpret its command.
This time he would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
Impregnating its pristine clarity,
—One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
Its gust of broken meat and garlic;
—One, by his soul's too-much presuming
To turn the frankincense's fuming
And vapours of the candle starlike
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
May poison it for healthy breathing—
But the Critic leaves no air to poison;

Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
Thus much of Christ, does he reject?
And what retain? His intellect?
What is it I must reverence duly?
Poor intellect for worship, truly,
Which tells me simply what was told
(If mere morality, bereft
Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
Elsewhere by voices manifold;
With this advantage, that the stater
Made nowise the important stumble
Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
But how does shifting blame, evade it?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity?
The stumbling-block, his speech—who laid it?
How comes it that for one found able
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter?
Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better?
Strange goodness, which upon the score
Of being goodness, the mere due
Of man to fellow-man, much more
To God,—should take another view
Of its possessor's privilege,
And bid him rule his race! You pledge
Your fealty to such rule? What, all—
From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
And that brave weather-battered Peter
Whose stout faith only stood completer
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,

As, more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
All, down to you, the man of men,
Professing here at Göttingen,
Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,
Are sheep of a good man! And why?
The goodness,—how did he acquire it?
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?
Choose which; then tell me, on what ground
Should its possessor dare propound
His claim to rise o'er us an inch?
Were goodness all some man's invention,
Who arbitrarily made mention
What we should follow, and whence flinch,—
What qualities might take the style
Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing
Met with as general acquiescing
As graced the alphabet erewhile,
When A got leave an Ox to be,
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,—
For thus inventing thing and title
Worship were that man's fit requital.
But if the common conscience must
Be ultimately judge, adjust
Its apt name to each quality
Already known,—I would decree
Worship for such mere demonstration
And simple work of nomenclature,
Only the day I praised, not nature,
But Harvey, for the circulation.
I would praise such a Christ, with pride
And joy, that he, as none beside,
Had taught us how to keep the mind
God gave him, as God gave his kind,

Freer than they from fleshly taint:
* I would call such a Christ our Saint,
As I declare our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare: each shall take
His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake —
Though some objected—"Had we seen
"The heart and head of each, what screen
"Was broken there to give them light,
"While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
"We should no more admire, perchance,
"That these found truth out at a glance,
"Than marvel how the bat discerns
"Some pitch-dark cavern's fiftly turns,
"Led by a finer tact, a gift
"He boasts, which other birds must shift
"Without, and grope as best they can."
No, freely I would praise the man,—
Nor one whit more, if he contended
That gift of his, from God, descended.
Ah friend, what gift of man's does not?
No nearer something, by a jot,
Rise an infinity of nothings
Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:
Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings,
Make that creator which was creature?
Multiply gifts upon man's head,
And what, when all's done, shall be said
But—the more gifted he, I ween!
That one's made Christ, this other, Pilate,
And this might be all that has been,—

So what is there to frown or smile at?
What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity?

XVII.

Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
Though he is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in his image to witness him:
And were no eye in us to tell,
Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
That light would want its evidence,—
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
And, if no better proof you will care for,
—Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better—true, but my fact is,
'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction

For practising what we know already.
*And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady,
"High-minded," hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run "Believe in good,
"In justice, truth, now understood
"For the first time?"—or, "Believe in me,
"Who lived and died, yet essentially
"Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII.

"Can it be that he stays inside!
Is the vesture left me to commune with?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
Even at this lecture, if she tried?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without throb for Christ's attributes,
As the lecturer makes his special boast!
If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.
Admire we, how from heart to brain

(Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
One instinct rises and falls again,
Restoring the equilibrium.
And how when the Critic had done his best,
And the pearl of price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor's lecture-table,—
When we looked for the inference and monition
That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,—
He bids us, when we least expect it,*
Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,
Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays damage done rewardingly,
So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly!
'Go home and venerate the myth
'I thus have experimented with—
'This man, continue to adore him
'Rather than all who went before him,
'And all who ever followed after!'—
Surely for this I may praise you, my brother!
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter?
That's one point gained: can I compass another?
Unlearned love was safe from spurning—
Can't we respect your loveless learning?
Let us at least give learning honour!
What laurels had we showered upon her,
Girding her loins up to perturb
Our theory of the Middle Verb;
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar
O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter;
Or curing the halt and maimed 'Ikettides,'
While we lounged on at our indebted ease:

Instead of which, a tricky demon
Sets her at Titus or Philemon!
When ignorance wags his ears of leather
And hates God's word, 'tis altogether;
Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
—And you, the audience, who might ravage
The world wide, enviably savage,
Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
More than Herr Heine (before his fever),—
I do not tell a life so arrant
As say my passion's wings are furled up,
And, without plainest heavenly warrant,
I were ready and glad to give the world up—
But still, when you rub brow meticulous,
And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
—God forbid I should find you ridiculous!
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
'Christians,'—abhor the deist's pravity,—
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse,
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
And they really carry what they say carries them."

XIX.

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find a new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting

From further tracking and trying and testing.
"This tolerance is a genial mood!"
(Said I, and a little pause ensued).
"One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
A value for religion's self,
A carelessness about the sects of it.
Let me enjoy my own conviction,
Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,
Still spying there some dereliction
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness! •
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that both our faiths (though duller
His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
Originally had one colour!
Better pursue a pilgrimage
Through ancient and through modern times
To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see saint, savage, sage
Fuse their respective creeds in one
Before the general Father's throne!"

XX.

—'Twas the horrible storm began afresh!
The black night caught me in his mesh,
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
I was left on the college-step alone.
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
Far, far away, the receding gesture,
And looming of the lessening vesture!—
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart expand
In the lazy glow of benevolence,

O'er the various modes of man's belief.
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
"Needs must there be one way, our chief
Best way of worship: let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share!
This constitutes my earthly care:
God's is above it and distinct.
For I, a man, with men am linked,
And not a brute with brutes; no gain
That I experience, must remain
Unshared: but should my best endeavour
To share it, fail—subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May—doth, I will believe—bring back
All wanderers to a single track.
Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me—no more, can I—
It is but for myself I know;
The world rolls witnessing around me
Only to leave me as it found me;
Men cry there, but my ear is slow:
Their races flourish or decay
—What boots it, while yon lucid way
Loaded with stars divides the vault?
But soon my soul repairs its fault
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life! So viewed,
No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
With witnessings of providence:
And woe to me if when I look
Upon that record, the sole book

Unsealed to me, I take no heed
Of any warning that I read!
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul?—I cannot bid
The world admit he stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
I only knew he named my name:
But what is the world to me, for sorrow
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow
It drops the remark, with just-turned head
'Then, on again, 'That man is dead!'
Yes, but for me—my name called,—drawn
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—
Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,—
With a rapid finger circled round,
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground
To fight from, where his foot was found;
Whose ear but a minute since lay free
To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—
Summoned, a solitary man,
To end his life where his life began,
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van!
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
By the hem of the vesture!—"

XXI.

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled

Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
Out of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright.
On my bench, as if I had never left it?
—Never flung out on the common at night
Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
Or the laboratory of the Professor!
For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall,
She had slid away a contemptuous space:
And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have happened?
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?

Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
Second, his gesture is too emphatic:
Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
Of making square to a finite eye
The circle of infinity,
And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
Great news! the sermon poves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,
Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy!
And now that I know the very worst of him,
What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?
Ha! Is God mocked, as he asks?
Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
And dare, dispatched to a river-head
For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which he sent,
And return with another thing instead?—
Saying, "Because the water found
"Welling up from underground,
"Is mingled with the taints of earth,
"While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
"And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
"The world with the leap of a river-pulse,—
"Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
"And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:
"See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
"One would suppose that the marble bled.
"What matters the water? A hope I have nursed:

"The waterless cup will quench my thirst."
—Better have knelt at the poorest stream
That trickles in pain from the straightest rift!
For the less or the more is all God's gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
And here, is there water or not, to drink?
I then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God's help, have attained to think
My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.
For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure?
Heaven soon sets right all other matters!—
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt?
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
May it be mine! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
Turn'd sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
Of posturings and petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!

Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,
Prophesied of by that horrible husk—
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth or personification,—
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation!
Meantime, in the still recurring fear •
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,
With none of my own made—I choose here!
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me;
I have done: and if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
May truth shine out, stand ever before us!
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

I.

How very hard it is to be
A Christian! Hard for you and me,
—Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul—
For that is always hard to do;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.
“This aim is greater,” you will say,
“And so more arduous every way.”
—But the importance of their fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
Proportional encouragement.
“Then, what if it be God’s intent
That labour to this one result
“Should seem unduly difficult?”
Ah, that’s a question in the dark—
And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race:
As we proceed, it shifts its place,

And where we looked for crowns to fall,
We find the tug's to come,—that's all.

II.

At first you say, "The whole, or chief
"Of difficulties, is belief.
"Could I believe once thoroughly,
"The rest were simple. What? Am I
"An idiot, do you think,—a beast?
"Prove to me, only that the least
"Command of God is God's indeed,
"And what injunction shall I need
"To pay obedience? Death so nigh,
"When time must end, eternity
"Begin,—and cannot I compute,
"Weigh loss and gain together, suit
"My actions to the balance drawn,
"And give my body to be sawn
"Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied
"To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,
"Like any martyr of the list?
"How gladly!—if I make acquit,
"Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,
"Of God's eternity of joy."

III.

—And certainly you name the point
Whereon all turns: for could you joint
This flexile finite life once tight
Into the fixed and infinite,
You, safe inside, would spurn what's out,
With carelessness enough, no doubt—
Would spurn mere life: but when time brings

To their next stage your reasonings,
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
Nor see the path so well, I think.

IV.

You say, "Faith may be, one agrees,
"A touchstone for God's purposes,
"Even as ourselves conceive of them.
"Could he acquit us or condemn
"For holding what no hand can loose,
"Rejecting when we can't but choose?
"As well award the victor's wreath
"To whosoever should take breath
"Duly each minute while he lived—
"Grant heaven, because a man contrived
"To see its sunlight every day
"He walked forth on the public way.
"You must mix some uncertainty
"With faith, if you would have faith be.
"Why, what but faith, do we abhor
"And idolize each other for—
"Faith in our evil or our good,
"Which is or is not understood
"Aright by those we love or those
"We hate, thence called our friends or foes?
"Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,
"When, turning from the ugly face,
"I found belief in it too hard;
"And she and I have our reward.
"—Yet here a doubt peeps: well for us
"Weak beings, to go using thus
"A touchstone for our little ends,
"Trying with faith the foes and friends;

"—But God, bethink you! I would fain
"Conceive of the Creator's reign
"As based upon exacter laws
"Than creatures build up with applause.
"In all God's acts—(as Plato cries
"He doth)—he should geometrize.
"Whence, I desiderate . . ."

v.

I see!

You would grow as a natural tree,
Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
The world's so perfect and entire,
Quite above faith, so right and fit!
Go there, walk up and down in it!
No. The creation travails, groans—
Contrive your music from its moans,
Without or let or hindrance, friend!
That's an old story, and its end
As old—you come back (be sincere)
With every question you put here
(Here where there once was, and is still,
We think, a living oracle,
Whose answers you stand carping at)
This time flung back unanswered flat,—
Beside, perhaps, as many more
As those that drove you out before,
Now added, where was little need.
Questions impossible, indeed,
To us who sat still, all and each
Persuaded that our earth had speech,
Of God's, writ down, no matter if
In cursive type or hieroglyph,—

Which one fact freed us from the yoke
Of guessing why he never spoke.
You come back in no better plight
Than when you left us,—am I right?

VI.

So, the old process, I conclude,
Goes on, the reasoning's pursued
Further. You own, "'Tis well averred,
"A scientific faith's absurd,
"—Frustrates the very end 'twas meant
"To serve. So, I would rest content
"With a mere probability,
"But, probable; the chance must lie
"Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,
"So long as there be just enough
"To pin my faith to, though it hap
"Only at points: from gap to gap
"One hangs up a huge curtain so,
"Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
"Foldless and flat along the wall.
"What care I if some interval
"Of life less plainly may depend
"On God? I'd hang there to the end;
"And thus I should not find it hard
"To be a Christian and debarred
"From trailing on the earth, till furled
"Away by death.—Renounce the world
"Were that a mighty hardship? Plan
"A pleasant life, and straight some man
"Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
"Abundant means to compass it,
"Shall turn deliberate aside

"To try and live as, if you tried
"You clearly might, yet most despise.
"One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
"Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
"In patient hope that, ten years hence,
"‘Somewhat completer,’ he may say,
"‘My list of *coleoptera*!’
"While just the other who most laughs
"At him, above all epitaphs
"Aspires to have his tomb describe
"Himself as sole among the tribe
"Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed
"A Grignon with the Regent’s crest.
"So that, subduing, as you want,
"Whatever stands predominant
"Among my earthly appetites
"For tastes and smells and sounds and sights,
"I shall be doing that alone,
"To gain a palm-branch and a throne,
"Which fifty people undertake
"To do, and gladly, for the sake
"Of giving a Semitic guess,
"Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

VII.

Good: and the next thing is,—look round
For evidence enough! 'Tis found,
No doubt: as is your sort of mind,
So is your sort of search: you'll find
What you desire, and that's to be
A Christian. What says history?
How comforting a point it were
To find some mummy-scrap declare

There lived a Moses! Better still,
Prove Jonah's whale translatable
Into some quicksand of the seas,
Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
That faith might clap her wings and crow
From such an eminence! Or, no—
The human heart's best; you prefer
Making that prove the minister
To truth; you probe its wants and needs,
And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
Meet these *most* aptly,—resolute
That faith *plucks* such substantial fruit
Wherever these two correspond,
She little needs to look beyond,
And puzzle out who Orpheus was,
Or Dionysius Zagrias.
You'll find sufficient, as I say,
To satisfy you either way;
You wanted to believe; your pains
Are crowned—you do: and what remains?
“Renounce the world!”—Ah, were it done
By merely cutting one by one
Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
How easy were it!—how soon past,
If once in the believing mood!
“Such is man's usual gratitude,
“Such thanks to God do we return,
“For not exacting that we spurn
“A single gift of life, forego
“One real gain,—only taste them so
“With gravity and temperance,
“That those mild virtues may enhance
“Such pleasures, rather than abstract—

"Last spice of which, will be the fact
"Of love discerned in every gift;
"While, when the scene of life shall shift,
"And the gay heart be taught to ache,
"As sorrows and privations take
"The place of joy,—the thing that seems
"Merc misery, under human schemes,
"Becomes, regarded by the light
"Of love, as very near, or quite
"As good a gift as joy before.
"So plain is it that, all the more
"God's dispensation's merciful,
"More pettishly we try and cull
"Briers, thistles, from our private plot,
"To mar God's ground where thorns are not!"

VIII.

Do you say this, or I!—Oh, you!
Then, what, my friend!—(thus I pursue
Our parley)—you indeed opine
That the Eternal and Divine
Did, eighteen centuries ago,
In very truth . . . Enough! you know
The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,
That Life, that Death! And all, the earth
Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew black
Rather than see; all, nature's rack
And throe at dissolution's brink
Attested,—all took place, you think,
Only to give our joys a zest,
And prove our sorrows for the best!
We differ, then! Were I, still pale
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale

Waiting to hear God's voice declare
What horror followed for my share,
As implicated in the deed,
Apart from other sins,—concede
That if he blacked out in a blot
My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not
So very disproportionate!
Or there might be another fate—
I certainly could understand
(If fancies were the thing in hand)
How God might save, at that day's price,
The impure in their impurities,
Give formal licence and complete
To choose the fair and pick the sweet.
But there be certain words, broad, plain,
Uttered again and yet again,
Hard to mistake or overgloss—
Announcing this world's gain for loss,
And bidding us reject the same:
The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
In wickedness,—come out of it!
Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
But I who thrill through every nerve
At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—
How do you counsel in the case!

IX.

"I'd take, by all means, in your place,
"The safe side, since it so appears:
"Deny myself, a few brief years,
"The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
"Or cut the plant up by the root.
"Remember what a martyr said

"On the rude tablet overhead!
"I was born sickly, poor and mean,
"A slave: no misery could screen
"The holders of the pearl of price
"From Cæsar's envy; therefore twice
"I fought with beasts, and three times saw
"My children suffer by his law;
"At last my own release was earned:
"I was some time in being burned,
"But at the close a Hand came through
"The fire above my head, and drew
"My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
"Sergius, a brother, writes for me
"This testimony on the wall—
"For me, I have forgot it all.'
"You say right; this were not so hard!
"And since one nowise is debarred
"From this, why not escape some sins
"By such a method?"

X.

Then begins
To the old point, revulsion new—
(For 'tis just this, I bring you to)
If after all we should mistake,
And so renounce life for the sake
Of death and nothing else? You hear
Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer
Back to ourselves with good effect—
"There were my beetles to collect!
"My box—a trifle, I confess,
"But here I hold it, ne'ertheless!"
Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart

And answer) we, the better part
 Have chosen, though 'twere only hope,—
 Nor envy moles like you that grope
 Amid your veritable muck,
 More than the grasshoppers would truck,
 For yours, their passionate life away,
 That spends itself in leaps all day
 To reach the sun, you want the eyes
 To see, as they the wings to rise
 And match the noble hearts of them!
 Thus the contemner we condemn,—
 And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward
 Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
 —Not struck enough to overturn
 Our faith, but shake it—make us learn
 What I began with, and, I wis,
 End, having proved,—how hard it is
 To be a Christian!

XI.

“Proved, or not,
 “Howe’er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
 “You get of mine, for taking pains
 “To make it hard to me. Who gains
 “By that, I wonder? Here I live
 “In trusting ease; and here you drive
 “At causing me to lose what most
 “Yourself would mourn for had you lost!”

XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
 You leave St. Paul for *Æschylus*?
 —Who made his Titan’s arch-device

The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo, death loured
Before them at the platter's edge!
If faith should be, as I allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavours with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
'To take at need the victuals' place!
If, having dined, you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . . .

XIII.

Now, you shall see
And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking! I resolve
To utter—yes, it shall devolve
On you to hear as solemn, strange
And dread a thing as in the range
Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—
E'er happened to our kind! I still
Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak perhaps;
Seeing that if I carry through
My purpose, if my words in you
Find a live actual listener,
My story, reason must aver
False after all—the happy chance!
While, if each human countenance
I meet in London day by day,
Be what I fear,—my warnings fray
No one, and no one they convert,

And no one helps me to assert
How hard it is to really be
A Christian, and in vacancy
I pour this story!

XIV.

I commence

By trying to inform you, whence
It comes that every Easter-night
As now, I sit up, watch, till light,
Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs
That Easter-day is breaking slow.
On such a night three years ago,
It chanced that I had cause to cross
The common, where the chapel was,
Our friend spoke of, the other day—
You've not forgotten, I dare say.
I fell to musing of the time
So close, the blessed matin-prime
All hearts leap up at, in some guise—
One could not well do otherwise.
Insensibly my thoughts were bent
Toward the main point; I overwent
Much the same ground of reasoning
As you and I just now. One thing
Remained, however—one that tasked
My soul to answer; and I asked,
Fairly and frankly, what might be
That History, that Faith, to me
—Me there—not me in some domain
Built up and peopled by my brain,
Weighing its merits as one weighs

Mere theories for blame or praise,
—The kingcraft of the Lucumons,
Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,—
But my faith there, or none at all.
“How were my case, now, did I fall
“Dead here, this minute—should I lie
“Faithful or faithless?”—Note that I
Inclined thus ever!—little prone
For instance, when I lay alone
In childhood, to go calm to sleep
And leave a closet where might keep
His watch perdué some murderer
Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,
As good authentic legends tell:
“He might: but how improbable!
“How little likely to deserve
“The pains and trial to the nerve
“Of thrusting head into the dark!”—
Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
Beside, that, should the dreadful scout
Really lie hid there, and leap out
At first turn of the rusty key,
Mine were small gain that she could see,
Killed not in bed but on the floor,
And losing one night's sleep the more.
I tell you, I would always burst
The door ope, know my fate at first.
This time, indeed, the closet penned
No such assassin: but a friend
Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit
For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,
Who said a good deal that might pass,—
Heartening, impartial too, it was,

Judge else: "For, soberly now,—who
"Should be a Christian if not you?"
(Hear how he smoothed me down.) "One takes
"A whole life, sees what course it makes
"Mainly, and not by fits and starts—
"In spite of stoppage which imparts
"Fresh value to the general speed.
"A life, with none, would fly indeed:
"Your progressing is slower—right!
"We deal with progress and not flight.
"Through baffling senses passionate,
"Fancies as restless,—with a freight
"Of knowledge cumbersome enough
"To sink your ship when waves grow rough,
"Though meant for ballast in the hold,—
"I find, 'mid dangers manifold,
"The good bark answers to the helm
"Where faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm
"Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,
"Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
"Conceive a doubt, nor understand
"How senses hornier than his hand
"Should tice the Christian off his guard.
"More happy! But shall we award
"Less honour to the hull which, dogged
"By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,
"Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone
"And stanchions going, yet bears on,—
"Than to mere life-boats, built to save,
"And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
"Make perfect your good ship as these,
"And what were her performances!"
I added—"Would the ship reach home!

"I wish indeed 'God's kingdom come—'
"The day when I shall see appear
"His bidding, as my duty, clear
"From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day,
"Some future season; Easter may
"Prove, not impossibly, the time—
"Yes, that were striking—fates would chime
"So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
"The Judgment!—deeper in the spring
"Than now, however, when there's snow
"Capping the hills; for earth must show
"All signs of meaning to pursue
"Her tasks as she was wont to do
"—The skylark, taken by surprise
"As we ourselves, shall recognize
"Sudden the end. For suddenly
"It comes; the dreadful must be
"In that; all warrants the belief—
"At night it cometh like a thief.'
"I fancy why the trumpet blows;
"—Plainly, to wake one. From repose
"We shall start up, at last awake
"From life, that insane dream we take
"For waking now, because it seems.
"And as, when now we wake from dreams,
"We laugh, while we recall them, 'Fool,
"To let the chance slip, linger cool
"When such adventure offered! Just
"A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
"Aside, a wicked mage to stab—
"And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab!
"So shall we marvel why we grudged
"Our labour here, and idly judged

"Of heaven, we might have gained, but lose!
"Lose? Talk of loss, and I refuse
"To plead at all! You speak no worse
"Nor better than my ancient nurse
"When she would tell me in my youth
"I well deserved that shapes uncouth
"Frighted and teased me in my sleep:
"Why could I not in memory keep
"Her precept for the evil's cure?
"'Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
"'You'll wake forthwith!'"

xv.

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) "There—
"Burn it!" And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire

As fanned to measure equable,—
Just so great conflagrations kill
Night overhead, and rise and sink,
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network—then, each cleft
The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
As if a dragon's nostril split
And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
Then as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled: whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top: a dearth
Of fire i' the violet intervals,
Leaving exposed the utmost walls
Of time, about to tumble in
And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin
The Judgment-Day: to retrocede
Was too late now. "In very deed,"
(I uttered to myself) "that Day!"
The intuition burned away

All darkness from my spirit too:
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
Choosing the world. The choice was made;
And naked and disguiseless stayed,
And unevadable, the fact.
My brain held ne'ertheless compact
Its senses, nor my heart declined
Its office; rather, both combined
To help me in this juncture. I
Lost not a second,—agony
Gave boldness: since my life had end
And my choice with it—best defend,
Applaud both! I resolved to say,
“So was I framed by thee, such way
“I put to use thy senses here!
“It was so beautiful, so near.
“Thy world,—what could I then but choose
“My part there! Nor did I refuse
“To look above the transient boon
“Of time; but it was hard so soon
“As in a short life, to give up
“Such beauty: I could put the cup
“Undrained of half its fulness, by;
“But, to renounce it utterly,
“—That was too hard! Nor did the cry
“Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
“Authentically deep and plain
“Enough to make my lips let go,
“But thou, who knowest all, dost know
“Whether I was not, life’s brief while,
“Endeavouring to reconcile
“Those lips (too tardily, alas!)
“To letting the dear remnant pass,

"One day,—some drops of earthly good
"Untasted! Is it for this mood,
"That thou, whose earth delights so well,
"Hast made its complement a hell?"

XVII.

A final belch of fire like blood,
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a voice
Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
"Time ends, Eternity's begun,
"And thou art judged for evermore."

XVIII.

I looked up; all seemed as before;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,
No trace was left: I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and empty
Of life. 'Twas the last watch of night,
Except what brings the morning quite;
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear
And gazes on the earth he guards,
Safe one night more through all its wards,
Till God relieve him at his post.
"A dream—a waking dream at most!"
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)

"The world gone, yet the world is here?
"Are not all things as they appear?
"Is Judgment past for me alone?
"—And where had place the great white throne?
"The rising of the quick and dead?
"Where stood they, small and great? Who read
"The sentence from the opened book?"
So, by degrees, the blood forsook
My heart, and let it beat afresh;
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently:
When, lo, again, the voice by me!

XIX.

I saw . . . Oh brother, 'mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,
Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisaal laugh at fate!
One morn,—the Arab staggers blind
O'er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness,—
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies
And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged vapour, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt
It vanish up again?—So hapt
My chance. He stood there. Like the smoke
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,—
I saw him. One magnific pall

Mantled in massive fold and fall
His dread, and coiled in snaky swatches
About his feet: night's black, that bathes
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within—
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,
That intense meditation fixed
On his procedure,—pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, he spoke to me,
Who fell before his feet, a mass,
No man now.

XX.

“All is come to pass.
“Such shows are over for each soul
“They had respect to. In the roll
“Of Judgment which convinced mankind
“Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
“Terror must burn the truth into:
“Their fate for them!—thou hadst to do
“With absolute omnipotence,
“Able its judgments to dispense
“To the whole race, as every one
“Were its sole object. Judgment done,
“God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled
“To nothingness-for thee. This world,
“This finite life, thou hast preferred,
“In disbelief of God's own word,
“To heaven and to infinity.
“Here the probation was for thee,
“To show thy soul the earthly mixed

"With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
"The earthly joys lay palpable,—
"A taint, in each, distinct as well;
"The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
"Above them, but as truly were
"Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
"Thy choice was earth: thou didst attest
"Twas fitter spirit should subserve
"The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
"Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
"No claim to their inheritance
"Who chose the spirit's fugitive
"Brief gleams, and yearned, 'This were to live
"Indeed, if rays, completely pure
"From flesh that dulls them, could endure,—
"Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
"Our earth, to show how cold and swart
"It lies beneath their fire, but stand
"As stars do, destined to expand,
"Prove veritable worlds, our home!
"Thou saidst,—'Let spirit star the dome
"Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
"No nook of earth,—I shall not seek
"Its service further!' Thou art shut
"Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
"Thy sense upon the world: 'tis thine
"For ever—take it!"

XXI.

"How! Is mine,
"The world?" (I cried, while my soul broke
Out in a transport.) "Hast thou spoke
"Plainly in that! Earth's exquisite

"Treasures of wonder and delight,
"For me!"

XXII.

The austere voice returned,—
"So soon made happy? Hadst thou learned
"What God accounteth happiness,
"Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
"What hell may be his punishment
"For those who doubt if God invent
"Better than they. Let such men rest
"Content with what they judged the best.
"Let the unjust usurp at will:
"The filthy shall be filthy still:
"Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
"Hater, indulge thine enmity!
"And thou, whose heaven self-ordained
"Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
"Do it! Take all the ancient show!
"The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
"And men apparently pursue
"Their works, as they were wont to do,
"While living in probation yet.
"I promise not thou shalt forget
"The past, now gone to its account;
"But leave thee with the old amount
"Of faculties, nor less nor more,
"Unvisited, as heretofore,
"By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
"So, once more, take thy world! Expend
"Eternity upon its shows,
"Flung thee as freely as one rose
"Out of a summer's opulence,

"Over the Eden-barrier whence
"Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!"

XXIII.

I sat up. All was still again.
I breathed free: to my heart, back fled
The warmth. "But, all the world!"—I said.
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Of fern exist, to trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last!
Conceive, then, earth's resources! Vast
Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder! And this foot shall range
Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower?

XXIV.

Then the voice, "Welcome so to rate
"The arras-folds that variegates
"The earth, God's antechamber, well!
"The wise, who waited there, could tell
"By these, what royalties in store
"Lay one step past the entrance-door.
"For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
"This life's munificence! For such
"As thou,—a race, whereof scarce one
"Was able, in a million,
"To feel that any marvel lay
"In objects round his feet all day;

"Scarce one, in many millions more,
"Willing, if able, to explore
"The secreter, minuter charm!
"—Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
"Of power to cope with God's intent,—
"Or scared if the south firmament
"With north-fire did its wings refledge!
"All partial beauty was a pledge
"Of beauty in its plenitude:
"But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
"Retain it! plenitude be theirs
"Who looked above!"

XXV.

Though sharp despairs
Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
"What matter though my trust were gone
"From natural things! Henceforth my part
"Be less with nature than with art!
"For art supplants, gives mainly worth
"To nature; 'tis man stamps the earth—
"And I will seek his impress, seek
"The statuary of the Greek,
"Italy's painting—there my choice
"Shall fix!"

XXVI.

"Obtain it!" said the voice,
"—The one form with its single act,
"Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
"The one face, painters tried to draw,
"With its one look, from throngs they saw.
"And that perfection in their soul,

"These only hinted at? The whole,
"They were but parts off! What each laid
"His claim to glory on?—afraid
"His fellow-men should give him rank
"By the poor tentatives he shrank
"Smitten at heart from, all the more,
"That gazers pressed in to adore!
"‘Shall I be judged by only these?’
"If such his soul’s capacities,
"Even while he trod the earth,—think, now,
"What pomp in Buonarotti’s brow,
"With its new palace-brain where dwells
"Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
"That crumbled with the transient clay!
"What visions will his right hand’s sway
"Still turn to form, as still they burst
"Upon him! How will he quench thirst,
"Titanically infantine,
"Laid at the breast of the Divine!
"Does it confound thee,—this first page
"Emblazoning man’s heritage?—
"Can this alone absorb thy sight,
"As pages were not infinite,—
"Like the omnipotence which tasks
"Itself, to furnish all that asks
"The soul it means to satiate!
"What was the world, the starry state
"Of the broad skies,—what, all displays
"Of power and beauty intermixed,
"Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,—
"What else than needful furniture
"For life’s first stage! God’s work, be sure,
"No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!

"He filled, did not exceed, man's want
"Of beauty in this life. But through
"Life pierce,—and what has earth to do,
"Its utmost beauty's appanage,
"With the requirement of next stage?
"Did God pronounce earth 'very good?'
"Needs must it be, while understood
"For man's preparatory state;
"Nothing to heighten nor abate:
"Transfer the same completeness here,
"To serve a new state's use,—and drear
"Deficiency gapes every side!
"The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
"See the enwrapping rocky niche,
"Sufficient for the sleep, in which
"The lizard breathes for ages safe:
"Split the mould—and as this would chafe
"The creature's new world-widened sense,
"One minute after day dispense
"The thousand sounds and sights that broke
"In on him at the chisel's stroke,—
"So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
"Was, neither more nor less, enough
"To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
"Man reckoned it immeasurable!
"So thinks the lizard of his vault!
"Could God be taken in default,
"Short of contrivances, by you,—
"Or reached, ere ready to pursue
"His progress through eternity!
"That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
"Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
"To nothingness for ever; so,

"Has God abolished at a blow
"This world, wherein his saints were pent,—
"Who, though found grateful and content,
"With the provision there, as thou,
"Yet knew he would not disallow
"Their spirit's hunger, felt as well,—
"Unsated,—not unsatable,
"As paradise gives proof. Deride
"Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside!"

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, "Mind, the mind,
"So miserably cast behind,
"To gain what had been wisely lost!
"Oh, let me strive to make the most
"Of the poor stunted soul, I nipped
"Of budding wings, else now equipped
"For voyage from summer isle to isle!
"And though she needs must reconcile
"Ambition to the life on ground,
"Still, I can profit by late found
"But precious knowledge. Mind is best—
"I will seize mind, forego the rest.
"And try how far my tethered strength
"May crawl in this poor breadth and length.
"Let me, since I can fly no more,
"At least spin dervish-like about
"(Till giddy rapture almost doubt
"I fly) through circling sciences,
"Philosophies and histories!
"Should the whirl slacken there, then verse,
"Fining to music, shall asperse
"Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain

"Intoxicate, half-break my chain!
"Not joyless, though more favoured feet
"Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
"The floor. At least earth's bond is broke!"

XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
"Let me alone! No answer, pray.
"To this! I know what thou wilt say!
"All still is earth's,—to know, as much
"As feel its truths, which if we touch
"With sense, or apprehend in soul,
"What matter? I have reached the goal—
"‘Where to does knowledge serve!’ will burn
"My eyes, too sure, at every turn!
"I cannot look back now, nor stake
"Bliss on the race, for running’s sake.
"The goal’s a ruin like the rest!—
"And so much worse thy latter quest,"
(Added the voice) "that even on earth—
"Whenever, in man’s soul, had birth
"Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
"That pull the more into the less,
"Making the finite comprehend
"Infinity,—the bard would spend
"Such praise alone, upon his craft,
"As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
"Goes to the craftsman who arranged
"The seven strings, changed them and rechanged—
"Knowing it was the South that harped.
"He felt his song, in singing, warped;
"Distinguished his and God’s part: whence
"A world of spirit as of sense

"Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
"Which he could traverse, not remain
"A guest in—else were permanent
"Heaven on earth which its gleams were meant
"To sting with hunger for full light,—
"Made visible in verse, despite
"The veiling weakness,—truth by means
"Of fable, showing while it screens,—
"Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,
"Was ever fable on outside.
"Such gleams made bright the earth an age;
"Now, the whole sun's his heritage!
"Take up thy world, it is allowed,
"Thou who hast entered in the cloud!"

XXIX.

Then I—"Behold, my spirit bleeds,
"Catches no more at broken reeds,—
"But lilies flower those reeds above:
"I let the world go, and take love!
"Love survives in me, albeit those
"I love be henceforth masks and shows,
"Not loving men and women: still
"I mind how love repaired all ill,
"Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
"With parents, brothers, children, friends!
"Some semblance of a woman yet
"With eyes to help me to forget,
"Shall live with me; and I will match
"Departed love with love, attach
"Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn
"The poorest of the grains of corn
"I save from shipwreck on this isle,

"Trusting its barrenness may smile
"With happy foodful green one day,
"More precious for the pains. I pray,
"For love, then, only!"

XXX.

At the word,
The form, I looked to have been stirred
With pity and approval, rose
O'er me, as when the headsman throws
Axe over shoulder to make end—
I fell prone, letting him expend
His wrath, while thus the inflicting voice
Smote me. "Is this thy final choice?
"Love is the best! 'Tis somewhat late,
"And all thou dost enumerate
"Of power and beauty in the world,
"The mightiness of love was curled
"Inextricably round about.
"Love lay within it and without,
"To clasp thee,—but in vain! Thy soul
"Still shrunk from him who made the whole,
"Still set deliberate aside
"His love!—Now take love! Well betide
"Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take
"The show of love for the name's sake,
"Remembering every moment Who
"Beside creating thee unto
"These ends, and these for thee, was said
"To undergo death in thy stead
"In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
"What doubt in thee could countervail
"Belief in it? Upon the ground

“That in the story had been found
“Too much love! How could God love so?
“He who in all his works below
“Adapted to the needs of man,
“Made love the basis of the plan,—
“Did love, as was demonstrated:
“While man, who was so fit instead
“To hate, as every day gave proof,—
“Man thought man, for his kind’s behoof,
“Both could and did invent that scheme
“Of perfect love: ’twould well beseem
“Cain’s nature thou wast wont to praise,
“Not tally with God’s usual ways!”

XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly—
“Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
“Or grant what shall seem heaven almost!
“Let me not know that all is lost,
“Though lost it be—leave me not tied
“To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
“Let that old life seem mine—no more—
“With limitation as before,
“With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
“Be all the earth a wilderness!
“Only let me go on, go on,
“Still hoping ever and anon
“To reach one eve the Better Land!”

XXXII.

Then did the form expand, expand—
I knew him through the dread disguise

As the whole God within his eyes
Embraced me.

XXXIII.

When I lived again,
The day was breaking,—the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision? False or true?
Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream—be sure
A mere dream and distemperature—
The last day's watching: then the night,—
The shock of that strange Northern Light
Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, wh. may yet escape,
She knows, the fiend in angel's shape!
Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said!
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear
Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
And think, "How dreadful to be grudged

"No ease henceforth, as one that's judged,
"Condemned to earth for ever, shut
"From heaven!"

But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite,—and who can say!

MEN AND WOMEN.

LONDON AND FLORENCE, 184— 185—.

MEN AND WOMEN.

"TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS."

STOP playing, poet! May a brother speak?
'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art:
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
—True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!

But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough:
Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think;

Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse:
Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason—so, you aim at men.
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true;
We see and hear and do not wonder much:

If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!
As German Bœhme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes!
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,
(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our mind)
We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—
Another Bœhme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses say,—
Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
John, who made things Bœhme wrote thoughts about?
He with a "look you!" vents a brace of rhymes,
And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
And musty volumes, Bœhme's book and all,—
Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again!
You are a poem, though your poem's naught.
The best of all you showed before, believe,
Was your own boy-face o'er the finer chords
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none did:
The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads no whither; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time:
You'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some house
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,

And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognisance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him.
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
And reads them in his bed-room of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
As back into your mind the man's look came—
Stricken in years a little,—such a brow
His eyes had to live under!—clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's claw.
Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress,—was 't our friend,
His letter to the King, that did it all?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?
Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month;
Our city gets new governors at whiles,—

But never word or sign, that I could hear,
 Notified to this man about the streets
 The King's approval of those letters conned
 The last thing duly at the dead of night.
 Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord,
 Exhorting when none heard--"Beseech me not!
 "Too far above my people,--beneath me!
 "I set the watch,--how should the people know?
 "Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!"
 Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least—
 That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
 Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
 You found he ate his supper in a room
 Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
 And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
 Poor man, he lived another kind of life
 In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwisel
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
 (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
 And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
 Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
 Would point him out to me a dozen times;
 "St—St," he'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"
 I had been used to think that personage
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,

And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorized the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys;
We were in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay garret sides
And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at once!
No further show or need for that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?
Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES.

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed
By none whose temples whiten this the world.

Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along;
I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace;
On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,
And every feathered mother's callow brood,
And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here;
And this dead Youth, Aesclepios bends above,
Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways,
And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,
Neglected homage to another god:
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
Hippolitos exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord:
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve.
And Theseus, read, returning, and believed,
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth,
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained
That of his wishes should be granted three,

And one he imprecated straight—"Alive
"May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands!"
Poseidon heard, ai ail And scarce the prince
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car
That give the feet a stay against the strength
Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their speed
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster flung
His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,
Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast,
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein
Which either hand directed; nor they quenched
The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell,
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands
On that detested beach, was bright with blood
And morsels of his flesh: then fell the steeds
Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,
Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
His people, who had witnessed all afar,
Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos.
But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
I, in a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.

Then Theseus lay the woofullest of men,
And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid
His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed
To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;
Lest at my fame the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some faded poor
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object
Such slackness to my worshippers who turn
Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand,
As they had climbed Olumpos to report
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—
I interposed: and, this eventful night,—
(While round the funeral pyre the populace
Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped
O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—
As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed
Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night,
And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars
Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,
And splendid gums like gold.)—my potency
Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
In the thrice-venerable forest here.
And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,

Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught
The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,
To know their secret'st virtue and express
The saving soul of all: who so has soothed
With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,
Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,
And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,
And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot
Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer,
Divine presenter of the healing rod,
Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer!
Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies!
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
That strew the turf around the twain! While I
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE

STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,

To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward:
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence

A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. 'Thou laughest here!
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
'Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write, what harms not, though he steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else

The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The just-turned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:

—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
And that's a sample how his years must go.
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes starved small.
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—

Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—"tis but a word," object—

"A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
'Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
He holds on firmly to some thread of life--
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet--
'The spiritual life around the earthly life:
'The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplexed with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze
"It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be."
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,

Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth:
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be.
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
"Be it as God please" reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
"Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
"To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
"Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once!"
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—
As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:

Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed:
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?

Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,

The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too---
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
"Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
"Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
"But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
"And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

THERE'S heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me; splendor-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.

I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child;
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so:
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irreversibly
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop!
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up;
Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast:
While sweet dew turns to the gourd's hurt,
And bloats and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,

And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;
Whose life on earth aspired to be
One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win
If not love like God's love for me,
At least to keep his anger in;
And all their striving turned to sin.
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun!
God, whom I praise; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand?

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around

Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door

Of some strange house of idols at its rites!

This world seemed not the world it was before:
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped
... Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I hate,

“This likes me more, and this affects me less!”
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles

My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—

At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine

While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke, .
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!

O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth!
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?

Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

FRA LIPPO LIPPL

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters? Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you *make* amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me

(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim
 shapes,
And a face that looked up ... zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—

"To quit this very miserable world?
"Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"
thought I;

By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.

I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use:
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphony's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A.s and B.s,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked
black.

"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?"

"In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.

"What if at last we get our man of parts,

"We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese

"And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine

"And put the front on it that ought to be!"

And hereupon he bade me daub away.

Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disembodying.

First, every sort of monk, the black and white,

I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,

From good old gossips waiting to confess

Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends, —

To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,

Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row

Of admiration, half for his beard and half

For that white anger of his victim's son

Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,

Signing himself with the other because of Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this

After the passion of a thousand years)

Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,

(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling) prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'Tis ask and have;
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—“That's the very man!
“Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
“That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
“To care about his asthma: it's the life!”
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. “How? what's here?
“Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
“Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
“As much as pea and pea! it's devil's game!
“Your business is not to catch men with show,
“With homage to the perishable clay,
“But lift them over it, ignore it all,
“Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh. *
“Your business is to paint the souls of men—
“Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . no, it's not.
“It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
“(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
“It's . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
“Give us no more of body than shows soul!
“Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
“That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
“Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head

"With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
"Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
"Rub all out, try at it a second time.
' Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
"She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
"Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
"Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have
missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds;

You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still - "It's art's decline, my son!
"You're not of the true painters, great and old;
"Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
"Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
"Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them--sometimes do, and sometimes don't,
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over.
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,

Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to! What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
"Are here already; nature is complete:
"Suppose you reproduce her— (which you can't)
"There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
"It does not say to folks—remember matins,
"Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best,

A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
"Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
"But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
"The pious people have so eased their own
"With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
"We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
"Expect another job this time next year,
"For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
"Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

--That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
... There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office, I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—

Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
"He made you and devised you, after all,
"Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there,
draw—
"His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
"We come to brother Lippo for all that,
"*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing

That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good bye: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.

To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common greyness silvers everything.—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),— but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do.
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!

This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do what many dream of all their lives
— Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive— you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,

Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain;
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
"Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No
doubt.

Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
(Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?

Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you,
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
"The present by the future, what is that?
"Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
"Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside:
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!

I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was, to have ended there; then, if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
"The Roman's is the better when you pray,
"But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,

Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
"Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
"Who, were he set to plan and execute
"As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
"Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick

Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not your's this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,

And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

Rome, 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine... ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,

Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .

Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—

And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupifying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point.
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,

Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith!
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!
I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,

Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;
It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
These hot long ceremonies of our church
Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
You take me—amply pay it! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps
Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time:
'Tis break of day! You do despise me then.
And if I say, "despise me,"—never fear!
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair, for example: here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(*Status, entourage*, worldly circumstance)
Quite to its value—very much indeed:
—Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once—
You'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and years to come,
Hints of the bishop,—names me—that's enough:
"Blougram? I knew him"—(into it you slide)
"Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
"All alone, we two; he's a clever man:
"And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—
"Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine.
"Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
"He's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had seen

"Something of mine he relished, some review:
"He's quite above their humbug in his heart,
"Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade.
"I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times:
"How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!"
Che che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take;
You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths:
The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays —
You do despise me; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's: you would not be I.
You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,
Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself,
—That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based! for say they make me Pope
(They can't—suppose it for our argument)
Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you:
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor played Death on a stage,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world;
Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
Because the play was done, to shift himself,

Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now?
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realized,
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
I would be merely much: you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why
The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means: a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealize away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile!

We mortals cross the ocean of this world

Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare?
You come on shipboard with a landsman's list
Of things he calls convenient: so they are!
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next:
Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes!
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add!
'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese!—
Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
—Alas, friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name
'The captain, or whoever's master here—
You see him screw his face up; what's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square!"
If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly—
And if, in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board
Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you off;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas over,
You peep up from your utterly naked boards
Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!)

And mortified you mutter "Well and good;
"He sits enjoying his sea-furniture;
"Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it:
"Though I've the better notion, all agree,
"Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
"Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—
"I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!"
And meantime you bring nothing: never mind—
You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting-place.
See my way: we're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then;
Each note and check the other in his work,—
Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticise!
What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard:
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend: well, I do not believe—
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.

You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise:
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
In no wise! all we've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God, —what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could—then must have done long since:
If so, when, where and how? some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit

Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

—That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be indeed a road;
While if he view it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable! what's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?
And so we stumble at truth's very test!
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

"Well," you rejoin, "the end's no worse, at least;
"We've reason for both colours on the board:
"Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
"And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even,—faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—
The man made for the special life o' the world—
Do you forget him? I remember though!

Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy--they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you,
Not so you'll take it,—though you get nought else.
I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
—For you, it does, however?—that, we'll try!
'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,
Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, "Friends,
"I absolutely and peremptorily
"Believe!"—I say, faith is my waking life:
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking's the main point with us
And my provision's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What's midnight doubt before the dayspring's faith?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognise the night, give dreams their weight—

To be consistent you should keep your bed,
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe?
Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you
Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.
Its estimation, which is half the fight,
'That's the first-cabin comfort I secure:
The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!
Come, come, it's best believing, if we may;
You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,
Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.
In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these;
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellow would choose otherwise:
We let him choose upon his own account

So long as he's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was:
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge:
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend!
Such as you know me, I'am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself—by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, but the tact
'To let external forces work for me,
—Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;
Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride;
It does so,—which for me's a great point gained,

Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that's born of fear:
While at the same time, there's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take!
An uniform I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore! now folks kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is; not of what might be,
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough:
Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives!
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;

The tailless man exceeds me: but being tailed
I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that.
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way.
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what's its name?)

While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—
That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute; what's to note in that?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands!
Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books —
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages,— just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights between?
So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way!
It's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago

They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course believes;"

And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."

But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet

"How can he?" All eyes turn with interest.

Whereas, step off the line on either side—

You, for example, clever to a fault,

The rough and ready man who write apace,

Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—

You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?

Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,

All Peter's chains about his waist, his back

Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—

Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?

But I, the man of sense and learning too,

The able to think yet act, the this, the that,

I, to believe at this late time of day!

Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours! Admire me as these may

You don't. But whom at least do you admire?

Present your own perfection, your ideal,

Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste!

Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?

Concede the means; allow his head and hand,

(A large concession, clever as you are)

Good! In our common primal element

Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—

We're still at that admission, recollect!)

Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er

The secondary temporary aims

Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—

Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust

God knows through what or in what? it's alive

And shines and leads him, and that's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out our purpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same?
—Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve—
Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away!
What's the vague good o' the world, for which you
dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up?
We neither of us see it! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time!
Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
"The State, that's I," quack-nonsense about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime*?
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such?
No: for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to come!
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right?

This present life is all?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an arch-duchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
Therefore I will not.

Take another case;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poets? shall we write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own,
Without a risk to run of either sort?
I can't!—to put the strongest reason first.
“But try,” you urge, “the trying shall suffice;
“The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
“Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!”
Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me!
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone;
Why should I try to be what now I am?
If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find—
Trying for ever? while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination; stick to that!
Let him say, “In the face of my soul's works
“Your world is worthless and I touch it not

"Lest I should wrong them"—I'll withdraw my plea.
But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,
Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did).
—Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are:
I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had it when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,

He would not have it also in my sense.
We play one game; I send the ball aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
—Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!
Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind;
Such Luther's luck was: how shall such be mine?

If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result?
He looks upon no future: Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world—
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you: Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
More than Saint Paul! 'twould press its pay, you
think?

Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—
For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

"Ay, but since really you lack faith," you cry,
"You run the same risk really on all sides,
"In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
"As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
"It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
"No more available to do faith's work
"Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.
We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does!

By life and man's free will, God gave for that!
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:
That's our one act, the previous work's his own.
"You criticize the soil? it reared this tree—
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know?
I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure!
"What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done
and said,
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith—then you've faith enough:
What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,

On hearsay; it's a favourable one:

"But still," (you add) "there was no such good man,

"Because of contradiction in the facts.

"One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome, . . .

"This Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him

"I see he figures as an Englishman."

Well, the two things are reconcileable.

But would I rather you discovered that,

Subjoining—"Still, what matter though they be?

"Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:
I say it's meant to hide him all it can,
And that's what all the blessed evil's for.
Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live;
The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.

Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's my box—
I need the excitation of a pinch
Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose
Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.
“Leave it in peace” advise the simple folk:
Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.
How you'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
'That signifies some faith's about to die)
And set you square with Genesis again,—
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe--and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!
Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks

That used to puzzle people wholesomely:
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them?—brother Newman asks. . . .
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith!—is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, "It can't be—yet it shall!
"Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?
"Low things confound the high things!" and so forth.
That's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folks do. He's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go!

You'll say, the old system's not so obsolete
But men believe still: ay, but who and where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? "No," he smiles;
"Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock

According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule:
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, other matters equal, we'll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale—

How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
"The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do.
I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk:
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,
Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,
Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being—
In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Halfway into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
Scouts fur in Russia; what's its use in France?
In France spurns flannel; where's its need in Spain?

In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers!
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?
I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world,
I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort—that's good too;
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"
What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you declare,—
All special-pleading done with, truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,
To say so, act up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then,—act away!
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you. How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
And how you'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there's no higher law that counterchecks.
Put natural religion to the test
You've just demolished the revealed with—quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill and thief
Or even to be an atheistic priest!
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—

Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his brains beside,
So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage, club in hand;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves:
I read this in a French book t'other day.
Does law so analysed coerce you much?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but won't
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
In case he has a master after all!
You own your instincts? why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught?—no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours!
I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, to your mind, remains another way
For simple men: knowledge and power have rights,

But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about:
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not angels, neither are they brutes:
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud:
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all.
You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a face)—
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move? who has the right?
I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine:
"Pastor est tui Dominus." You find
In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them;
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you find them so;
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks:

And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?
If so, you beat—which means you are not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir; my age is double yours:
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We have both minds and bodies much alike:
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state?
You're young, I'm old, you must be old one day;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive?
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your life,
The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power

And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words.
You're shrewd and know that should you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,
Who'd sneer—"the bishop's an arch-hypocrite
"And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.
What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art—
I should have nothing to object: such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print—
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what's its name?
"The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
"Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds.

—Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches! be the first
"Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"—
Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."
Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows what
It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus,
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.

Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
“On the whole,” he thought, “I justify myself
“On every point where cavillers like this
“Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence,
“I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
“He's on the ground: if ground should break away
“I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
“Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
“His ground was over mine and broke the first:
“So, let him sit with me this many a year!”

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the “Outward-bound”
Another way than Blougram's purpose was:
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps
"Greece")—
To Protus in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.

Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake —
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East:
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.
The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,

Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
And ours is greater, had we skill to know:
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
'This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—then, what's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind; and after, so,

Occurred the combination of the same.
For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now mark me! those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more than
reach?

It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in our life:
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other god descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.

I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
This is a dream:—but no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the springs,
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers
That young and tender crescent moon, thy slave,
Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large:
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?

It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
'Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life?
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men? "For" (writest thou)
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought.
"Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
"The pictures men shall study; while my life,
"Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
"Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
"Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
"The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,
"Set on the promontory which I named.
"And that—some supple courtier of my heir
"Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
"To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
"I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?

If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
"Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
"Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
"Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
"All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
"The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
"And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take
flight,
"Till life's mechanics can no further go—
"And all this joy in natural life, is put,
"Like fire from off thy finger into each,
"So exquisitely perfect is the same.
"But 'tis pure fire, and they mere matter are;
"It has them, not they it: and so I choose
"For man, thy last premeditated work
"(If I might add a glory to the scheme)
"That a third thing should stand apart from both,
"A quality arise within his soul,
"Which, intro-active, made to supervise
"And feel the force it has, may view itself,
"And so be happy." Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,

The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
"Let progress end at once,—man make no step
"Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
"Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and unconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
The soul now climbs it just to perish there!
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more
"Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!
"Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
"Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical reciprocity,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,
It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.

They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast
"See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
"That I may be still happier—for thy use!"
If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign? I ask,
And get no answer, and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)

With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!

"But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) "what
"Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
"Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
"And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—

The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,
Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,

In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and
Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI.

I.

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE *

TO E. B. B.

London, September, 1855.

I.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, love, the book and me together:
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her life-time?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving —
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

III.

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)

* Originally appended to the collection of Poems called "Men and Women," the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition.

Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV.

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his *Inferno*.
Says he—"Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)

"Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
Says the poet — "Then I stopped my painting."

VI

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not? — than read a fresh Inferno.

VII.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of importance:"
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,—
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
"Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

X.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you
Other heights in other lives, God willing:
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, love!

XIII.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,

Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

XV.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it; lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy?
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

XVII.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

XVIII.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you.
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, sec, on my bosom!

R. B.

END OF VOL. I.

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING.

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VOL. II

IN A BALCONY—DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—
DRAMATIC ROMANCES.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1872.

CONTENTS.

IN A BALCONY	7
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ	39
DRAMATIC ROMANCES	199

IN A BALCONY.

RAGNI DI LUCCA, 1853.

IN A BALCONY.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

Nor. Now!

Con. Not now!

Nor. Give me them again, those hands—
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through!
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! The Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you;
Some time or other this was to be asked;
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain:
Let me ask now, Love!

Con. Do, and ruin us!

Nor. Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! Give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now! Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away,
If God please, with completion in my soul!

Con. I am not yours then? How content this man!
I am not his—who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,

Give all that was of me away to him—
 So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
 Takes part with him against the woman here,
 Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
 As caring that the world be cognisant
 How he loves her and how she worships him.
 You have this woman, not as yet that world.
 Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
 By saving what I cease to care about,
 The courtly name and pride of circumstance—
 The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
 Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;
 Just that the world may slip from under you—
 Just that the world may cry "So much for him—
 "The man predestined to the heap of crowns:
 "There goes his chance of winning one, at least!"

Nor. The world!

Con. You love it! Love me quite as well,
 And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

Nor. You pray for—what, in vain?

Con. Oh my heart's heart,
 How I do love you, Norbert! That is right:
 But listen, or I take my hands away!
 You say, "let it be now:" you would go now
 And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
 You love me—so you do, thank God!

Nor.

Thank God!

Con. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your
 love,
 And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
 My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
 Listening to me. You are the minister,

The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,
Her house had only dreamed of anciently:
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. "Name your own
reward!"

With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,—
You choose the single thing she will not grant;
Nay, very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralize your work:
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

Con. There, there!
So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case! For example now,
I'll say—I let you kiss me, hold my hands—
Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—
The kiss, because you have a name at court,
This hand and this, that you may shut in each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak.
"I was a nameless man; you needed me:
"Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
"A certain pretty cousin at your side.
"Why did I make such common cause with you?
"Access to her had not been easy else.
"You give my labours here abundant praise?
"Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.
"How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
"Give me her hand!"

Nor. And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

Con. Yes, just. You love a rose; no harm in that:
But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—
Then, mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself;
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures; there's a life
Better than life, and yet no life at all.
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognize its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all,
In better semblance than the things outside?

Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly?
—Say, "that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
"Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?"
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her:
How should it, with that life in these four walls
That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother—friends, a heap,
Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie!
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,
You feel, while you admire. How should she feel?
Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?
You only have to say "so men are made,
"For this they act; the thing has many names,
"But this the right one: and now, Queen, be just!"
Your life slips back; you lose her at the word:
You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Norbert,

Do you not understand?

Nor.

The Queen's the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window o'er the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow:
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love; what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice—
"The woman yonder, there's no use of life
"But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
"And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
"And spurn them, as they help or help not this;
"Only, obtain her!"—how was it to be?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be!
Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause
In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;
I worked because I want you with my soul:
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!

Con. Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might become impatient. What's conceived
Of us without here, by the folks within?
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours
Which broke the council up?—to bring about
One minute's meeting in the corridor!
And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,
Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"
A year of this compression's ecstasy
All goes for nothing! you would give this up
For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!
What tempts you?—their notorious happiness,
That you are ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain
Will be—the Queen grants all that you require,
Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
And me at once, and gives us ample leave
To live like our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious hand
Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,
And make it duty to be bold and swift,
Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
We never hawked by rights till flung from fist!
Oh, the man's thought! no woman's such a fool.

Nor. Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which
is more—

One made to love you, let the world take note!
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!
Set free my love, and see what love can do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.
So, good: but let my low ground shame their high!
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to wear you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall oft.
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now 'tis all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result—
Then think of this revulsion! I resume
Life after death, (it is no less than life,
After such long unlovely labouring days)
And liberate to beauty life's great need
O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time,

This eve intense with yon first trembling star
 We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught between
 The earth that rises and the heaven that bends;
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
 And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;
 All under God, each measured by itself.
 These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,
 The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
 The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose:
 See God's approval on his universe!
 Let us do so—aspire to live as these
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being true!
 Take the first way, and let the second come!
 My first is to possess myself of you;
 The music sets the march-step—forward, then!
 And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!

Con. And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:
 You do not know her, were not born to it,
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.
 Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,
 Generous as you are: for, in that thin frame
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,
 There lived a lavish soul until it starved
 Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul—
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
 (The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,
 Exactions and acquittance of the past!

Begin so—see what justice she will deal!
We women hate a debt as men a gift.
Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
Whose business is to sit thro' summer months
And dole out children leave to go and play,
Herself superior to such lightness—she
In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp,
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside:
We wonder such a face looks black on us?
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
(That were vain truly—none is left to wake)
But, let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
If she'll not coldly pay its warmest need!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit:
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of such cold kind
To pay her with, but love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love:
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declaring my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it! then, were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,

And make it offer what I really take,
 Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
 Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
 Since none loves Queens directly, none dares that,
 And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
 Suffices those who miss the name and thing!
 You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
 To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
 Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
 Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)
 You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,
 Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .
 —You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,
 Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
 'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth:
 Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
 Were scarcely false, as I'd express the sense.
 Will you remain here?

Con. O best heart of mine,
 How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
 Are mine as you have been her minister,
 Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
 Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
 I owe that withered woman everything—
 Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—
 Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?
 You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?
 Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

Nor. Remain here. How you know me!

Con.

Ah, but still——

*[He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music
 from within.]*

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance? She is here as he said. Speak quick!

Is it so? Is it true or false? One word?

Con. True.

Queen. Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

Con. Madam?

Queen. I love you, Constance, from my soul.
Now say once more, with any words you will,
'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

Con. Why should you doubt it?

Queen. Ah, why doubt? why doubt?
Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?
None see themselves; another sees them best.
You say "why doubt it?"—you see him and me.
It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—
Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,
Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,
And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven!

Queen. But it was so, Constance, it was so!
Men say— or do men say it? fancies say—
"Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
"Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
"Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love!"
One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
"Oh love, true, never think of love again!

"I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed."

So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

Con. I cannot understand—

Queen. The happier you!

Constance, I know not how it is with men:
For women (I am a woman now like you)
There is no good of life but love—but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
O Constance, how I love you!

Con. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come through you.
I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.
Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

Con. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me
And say, "she's old, she's grown unlovely quite
"Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still."
Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure!

Con. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the coming was not
strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and go?
I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—"one young man the more!
"He will love some one; that is nought to me:

"What would he with my marble stateliness?"
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
And I still older, with less flesh to change—
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
It seemed still harder when he first began
Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
The old way for the old end—interest.
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
Professing they've no care but for your cause,
Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,
And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,
First dancer's, gipsy's or street baladine's!
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech
Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,
Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,
Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand!
There have been moments, if the sentinel
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

Con. Who could have comprehended?

Queen.

Ay, who—who'

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

Con. I wait to tell it.

Queen. Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done,
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—
It must have finer aims to lure it on!
I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

Con. Me, madam?

Queen. It did seem to me, your face
Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you
Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,
You saw he loved you, and approved the love,
And so you both were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in the garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,
So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
That all this work should have been done by him
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose, some night like this—
Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—"And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
"My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,
"My happiest woman's self that might have been!

"These two shall have their joy and leave me here."
Yes—yes!

Con. Thanks!

Queen. And the word was on my lips
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
A mere calm statement of his just desire
For payment of his labour. When—O heaven,
How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes
And thunder in my ears at that first word
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—
He loved me—from the first step to the last,
Loved me!

Con. You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke
Of love? what if you should mistake?

Queen. No, no—
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!
He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
You were my reflex—(how I understood!)
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love was the end of every phrase.
Love is begun; this much is come to pass:
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours!
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have won!
Am I so old? This hair was early grey;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
Beautiful—for the last French painter did!
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!

Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
And set her by their side to take the eye:
I must have felt that good would come from you.
I am not generous—like him—like you!
But he is not your lover after all:
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?
You have not been mistaking words or looks
He said you were the reflex of myself.
And yet he is not such a paragon
To you, to younger women who may choose
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!
You know you never named his name to me—
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,
Not up now, even to you!

Con.

Then calm yourself.

Queen. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,
I will not play the fool, deceive myself;
'Tis all gone: put your cheek beside my cheek—
Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!
But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am *I* not left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old; it is in all the tales:
Young beauties love old poets who can love—
Why should not he, the poems in my soul,
The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,
The constancy? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,
And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How I will love him! Cannot men love love?

Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!
Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.
They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please;
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—
They spend a day with such and tire the next:
They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
Horrible though it be, that prejudice,
Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.
They will, they do: and will not, does not—he?

Con. How can he? You are wedded: 'tis a name
We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

Queen. Hear her! There, there now—could she
love like me?
What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?
See all it does or could do! so, youth loves!
Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
What I will—you, it was not born in! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

Con. You will do—dare do ... pause on what you say!

Queen. Hear her! I thank you, sweet, for that surprise.
You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!

I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.
I think I have borne enough and long enough,
And patiently enough, the world remarks,
To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this; God sends the accident express:
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost fear
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
How strong I am! Could Norbert see me now!

Con. Let me consider. It is all too strange.

Queen. You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me!
You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,
You will have many lovers, and love one—
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,
And taller than he is, for yourself are tall.
Love him, like me! Give all away to him;
Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,
Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,
And love him simply for his very self.
Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
Do all but just unlove him! He loves me.

Con. He shall.

Queen. You, step inside my inmost heart!
Give me your own heart: let us have one heart!
I'll come to you for counsel; "this he says,
"This he does; what should this amount to, pray?
"Beseech you, change it into current coin!

"Is that worth kisses? Shall I please him there?"
And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else?
Your love, according to your beauty's worth,
For you shall have some noble love, all gold:
Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.
—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,
I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:
Now, I would face the world with my new life,
With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
And then come back and tell you how it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years: what then?
Many remain: God has been very good.
You, stay here! 'Tis as different from dreams,
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE. Dance-music from within.]

NORBERT *enters*.

Nor. Well? we have but one minute and one word!

Con. I am yours, Norbert!

Nor. Yes, mine.

Con. Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

Nor. Constance?

Con. Your own! I know the thriftier way
Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)

And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve'
 Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
 My giving and your taking; both our joys
 Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
 I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
 Know what you have to trust to, trade upon!
 Use it, abuse it,—anything but think
 Hereafter, "Had I known she loved me so,
 "And what my means, I might have thriven with it."
 This is your means. I give you all myself.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

Con. Look on through years!
 We cannot kiss, a second day like this;
 Else were this earth, no earth.

Nor. With this day's heat
 We shall go on through years of cold.

Con. So, best!
 —I try to see those years—I think I see.
 You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back
 And lay all to the first glow—not sit down
 For ever brooding on a day like this
 While seeing the embers whiten and love die.
 Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,
 Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

Nor. Just so. I take and know you all at once.
 Your soul is disengaged so easily,
 Your face is there, I know you; give me time,
 Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
 My soul is slower: in a life I roll
 'The minute out whereto you condense yours—
 'The whole slow circle round you I must move,
 'To be just you. I look to a long life
 'To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
 'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one

Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide
Its coldness, were it cold.

Con. But how prove, how?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask?

Con. Quick, Norbert—how?

Nor. That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,
So I will seize and use all means to prove,
And show this soul of mine, you crown as yours,
And justify us both.

Con. Could you write books,
Paint pictures! One sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

Nor. And loves one's painting and one's writing, then,
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take your face
And write of it and paint it—to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you look.

I come to you; I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens there
Paint us!

Con. So, best!

Nor. I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success. This way is straight;
And time were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one man,
Through ways of work appointed by themselves.
I am not bid create—they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned at length
The dawn of the next nature, the new man
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
And who, they trust, shall find them out new ways
To heights as new which yet he only sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!
My will be on this people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,

The long uncertain struggle,—the success
 And consummation of the spirit-work,
 Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
 While rounded fair for lower men to see
 The Graces in a dance all recognise
 With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
 So triumph ever shall renew itself;
 Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
 Ever begin . . .

Con. I ever helping?

Nor. Thus!

[*As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.*]

Con. Hist, madam! So I have performed my part.
 You see your gratitude's true decency,
 Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!
 Begin, to end the sooner! What's a kiss?

Nor. Constance?

Con. Why, must I teach it you again?
 You want a witness to your dulness, sir?
 What was I saying these ten minutes long?
 Then I repeat—when some young handsome man
 Like you has acted out a part like yours,
 Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
 So very far beyond him, as he says—
 So hopelessly in love that but to speak
 Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,
 And makes some insignificant good soul,
 Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,
 And very stalking-horse to cover him
 In following after what he dares not face—
 When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)
 When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,
 —May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,
 And overpasses so his wildest dream,

With glad consent of all, and most of her
 The confidant who brought the same about—
 Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
 I do hold that the merest gentleman
 Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
 Dismiss it with a "There enough of you!"
 Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
 But like a liberal heart will rather turn
 And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours;
 "Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two lived
 "A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:
 "The confidant, the Constance, served not ill.
 "And though I shall forget her in due time,
 "Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
 "Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,—
 "Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
 "The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
 "And the first—which is the last—rewarding kiss."

Nor. Constance, it is a dream—ah, see, you smile!

Con. So, now his part being properly performed,
 Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
 As duly; I do justice in my turn.
 Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well;
 He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I
 Who served to prove your soul accessible,
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place
 When else they had wandered out into despair,
 And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
 Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-way
 And meet us royally and spare our fears:
 'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
 Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised
 By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!

Yourselves—the only one on earth who can—
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
For him,—he knows his own part!

Nor.

Have you done?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
Or did you but accept it? Well—at least
You lose by it.

Con.

Nay, madam, 'tis your turn!

Restrain him still from speech a little more,
And make him happier and more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!
Mark, Norbert! Do not shrink now! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
With her go put in practise the great schemes
You teem with, follow the career else closed—
Be all you cannot be except by her!
Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake
Anything—frankly say you love him! Else
He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive: I know the man!

Nor. I know the woman somewhat, and confess
I thought she had jested better: she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
—May still be right: I may do well to speak

And make authentic what appears a dream
 To even myself. For, what she says, is true:
 Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just now of love,
 Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
 But justified a warmth felt long before.
 Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say:
 Strangel but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said.
 Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak
 To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil:
 But still I had not waited to discern
 Your heart so long, believe me! From the first
 The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
 In absence even of your own words just now
 Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange,
 But takes a happy ending—in your love
 Which mine meets: be it so! as you choose me,
 So I choose you.

Nor. And worthily you choose.

I will not be unworthy your esteem,
 No, madam. I do love you; I will meet
 Your nature, now I know it. This was well.
 I see,—you dare and you are justified:
 But none had ventured such experiment,
 Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
 Less confident of finding such in me.
 I joy that thus you test me ere you grant
 The dearest richest beauteousest and best
 Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.
 So—back again into my part's set words—
 Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
 But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
 Create in me the love our Constance does.
 Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—

Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect—that's myself—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.
I take this lady.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap—
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all!
He is too cunning, madam! It was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Constance? Then,
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!
I am the Queen's; she only knows my brain:
She may experiment therefore on my heart
And I instruct her too by the result.
But you, Sweet, you who know me, who so long
Have told my heart-beats over, held my life
In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

Con. Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

Nor. Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your
test?

There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself,
I dared insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
"Take back the soul you offer, I keep mine!"
But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
"The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
"And, please you, give it to some playful friend,
"For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No: fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,

I would not dare insult a woman so,
 Were she the meanest woman in the world,
 And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Con. Norbert!

Nor. I love once as I live but once.
 What case is this to think or talk about?
 I love you. Would it mend the case at all
 Should such a step as this kill love in me?
 Your part were done: account to God for it!
 But mine—could murdered love get up again,
 And kneel to whom you please to designate,
 And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
 You did not know this, Constance? now you know
 That body and soul have each one life, but one:
 And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

Con. See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last
 word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus
 Loved me in earnest . . .

Nor. Ah, no jest holds here!
 Where is the laughter in which jest breaks up,
 And what this horror that grows palpable?
 Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?
 Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the truth?
 How could I other? Was it not your test,
 To try me, and what my love for Constance meant?
 Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
 The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
 A beggar,—asks him, what would buy his child?
 And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
 Returned as something noble from the rags.
 Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?
 You two glare each at each like panthers now.
 Constance, the world fades; only you stand there!

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of things,
 Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price?
 No—no—'tis easy to believe in you!
 Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
 Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still—
 Though I should curse, I love you. I am love
 And cannot change: love's self is at your feet!

[*The QUEEN goes out.*]

Con. Feel my heart; let it die against your own!

Nor. Against my own. Explain not; let this be!
 This is life's height.

Con. Yours, yours, yours!

Nor. You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are here
 I' the centre of the labyrinth? Men have died
 Trying to find this place, which we have found.

Con. Found, found!

Nor. Sweet, never fear what she can do!

We are past harm now.

Con. On the breast of God.

I thought of men—as if you were a man.

Tempting him with a crown!

Nor. This must end here:

It is too perfect.

Con. There's the music stopped.

What measured heavy tread? It is one blaze
 About me and within me.

Nor. Oh, some death

Will run its sudden finger round this spark
 And sever us from the rest!

Con. And so do well.

Now the doors open.

Nor. 'Tis the guard comes.

Con. Kiss!

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LONDON, 1864.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW.

I.

AH, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky s deranged:
Summer has stopped.

II.

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

III.

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love
For the lake, its swan;
For the dell, its dove;
And for thee—(oh, hasten)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

II.

BY THE FIRESIDE.

I.

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France!
Well, poor sailors took their chance;
I take mine.

II.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea:
Do sailors eye the casement—mute
Drenched and stark,
From their bark—
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm safe house and happy freight
—Thee and me?

III.

God help you, sailors, at your need!
Spare the curse!
For some ships, safe in port indeed,
Rot and rust,
Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept:
That is worse.

IV.

Who lived here before us two?
Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever—would I knew!—
Watch the man
With whom began
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your teeth!)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares?

III.

IN THE DOORWAY.

I.

THE swallow has set her six young on the rail,
And looks sea-ward:
The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale
To the leeward,—
On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the wind:
"Good fortune departs, and disaster's behind,"—
Hark, the wind with its wants and its infinite wail!

II.

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake:
How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its stake!
My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks curled.

III.

Yet here are we two; we have love, house enough,
With the field there,
This house of four rooms, that field red and rough,
Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a bent;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an event;
And they both will be gone at November's rebuff.

IV.

But why must cold spread? but wherefore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an infinite range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness and cold?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be bold!
Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter estrange!

IV.

ALONG THE BEACH.

I.

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love—is that much true?
And so I did love, so I do:
What has come of it all along?

II.

I took you—how could I otherwise?
For a world to me, and more;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
'Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III.

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth!
Now do I mis-state, mistake?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake?

IV.

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love! not so, indeed!
You were just weak earth, I knew:
With much in you waste, with many a weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

V.

And such as you were, I took you for mine:
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures?

VI.

Well, and if none of these good things came,
What did the failure prove?
The man was my whole world, all the same,
With his flowers to praise or his weeds to blame,
And, either or both, to love.

VII.

Yet this turns now to a fault—there! there!
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 'tis all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song:

VIII.

“How the light, light love, he has wings to fly
“At suspicion of a bond:
“My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-bye,
“Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,
“And why should you look beyond?”

V.

ON THE CLIFF.

I.

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock:
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II.

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face:
No iron like that!
Baked dry; of a weed, of a shell, no trace:
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III.

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV.

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly:
No turf, no rock, in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red!

V.

Is it not so
With the minds of men?
* The level and low,
* The burnt and bare, in themselves; but then
With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,
Love settling unawares!

.VI.

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF.

I.

"STILL ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?
"Which needs the other's office, thou or I?
"Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
"And can, in truth, my voice untie
"Its links, and let it go?

II.

"Art thou a dumb, wronged thing that would be righted,
"Entrusting thus thy cause to me? Forbear!
"No tongue can mend such pleadings; faith, requited
"With falsehood,—love, at last aware
"Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III.

'We have them; but I know not any tone
"So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
"Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
"If they knew any way to borrow
"A pathos like thy own?

IV.

"Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the sighs? The one
"So long escaping from lips starved and blue,
"That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun
"Stretches her length; her foot comes through
"The straw she shivers on;

V.

"You had not thought she was so tall: and spent,
"Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers shut
"Close, close, their sharp and livid nails indent
"The clammy palm; then all is mute:
"That way, the spirit went.

VI.

"Or wouldst thou rather that I understand
"Thy will to help me?—like the dog I found
"Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
"Who would not take my food, poor hound,
"But whined and licked my hand."

VII.

All this, and more, comes from some young man's pride
Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried:

VIII.

Instances he must—simply recognize?
Oh, more than so!—must, with a learner's zeal,
Make doubly prominent, twice emphasize,
By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

IX.

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the rest
Himself the undefeated that shall be:
Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—
His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest!

X.

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what the wind
Means in its moaning—by the happy prompt
Instinctive way of youth, I mean; for kind
Calm years, exacting their accompt
Of pain, mature the mind:

XI.

And some midsummer morning, at the lull
Just about daybreak, as he looks across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul,—

XII.

Then, when the wind begins among the vines,
So low, so low, what shall it say but this?
"Here is the change beginning, here the lines
"Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
"The limit time assigns."

XIII.

Nothing can be as it has been before;
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,
And keep it changeless! such our claim;
So answered,—Never more!

XIV.

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the world;
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and die.
Rise with it, then! Rejoice that man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly.
His soul's wings never furled!

XV.

That's a new question; still replies the fact,
Nothing endures: the wind moans, saying so;
We moan in acquiescence: there's life's pact,
Perhaps probation—do I know?
God does: endure his act!

XVI.

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
On his soul's hands' palms one fair good wise thing
Just as he grasped it! For himself, death's wave;
While time first washes—ah, the sting!—
O'er all he'd sink to save.

VII.

AMONG THE ROCKS.

I.

OH, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth;

Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

II.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

VIII.

BESIDE THE DRAWING-BOARD.

I.

"As like as a Hand to another Hand!"

Whoever said that foolish thing,
Could not have studied to understand
The counsels of God in fashioning,
Out of the infinite love of his heart,
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart

From the world of wonder left to praise,
If I tried to learn the other ways
Of love, in its skill, or love, in its power.

"As like as a Hand to another Hand:"

Who said that, never took his stand,
Found and followed, like me, an hour,
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear, almost,—of the limit-line!
As I looked at this, and learned and drew,

Drew and learned, and looked again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
Its beauty mounted into my brain,
And a fancy seized me; I was fain
To efface my work, begin anew,
Kiss what before I only drew;
Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,
Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing,
From Hand live oncc, dead long ago:
Princess-like it wears the ring
To fancy's eye, by which we know
That here at length a master found
His match, a proud lone soul its mate,
As soaring genius sank to ground
And pencil could not emulate
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear almost!—of the limit-line.

Long ago the god, like me
The worm, learned, each in our degree:
Looked and loved, learned and drew,
Drew and learned and loved again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
Till beauty mounted into his brain
And on the finger which outvied
His art he placed the ring that's there,
Still by fancy's eye descried,
In token of a marriage rare:
For him on earth, his art's despair,
For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

III.

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
I turned from to a cold clay cast—
I have my lesson, understand
The worth of flesh and blood at last!
Nothing but beauty in a Hand?
Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
"The fool forsooth is all forlorn
"Because the beauty, she thinks best,
"Lived long ago or was never born,—
"Because no beauty bears the test
"In this rough peasant Hand! Confessed
"Art is null and study void!"
"So sayest thou? So said not I,
"Who threw the faulty pencil by,

"And years instead of hours employed,
"Learning the veritable use
"Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
"Lines and hue of the outer sheath,
"If haply I might reproduce
"One motive of the mechanism,
"Flesh and bone and nerve that make
"The poorest coarsest human hand
"An object worthy to be scanned
"A whole life long for their sole sake.
"Shall earth and the cramped moment-space
"Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
"Now the parts and then the whole!
"Who art thou, with stunted soul
"And stunted body, thus to cry
"I love,—shall that be life's strait dole?
"I must live beloved or die!"
"This peasant hand that spins the wool
"And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
"Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—
"What use survives the beauty? Fool!"

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand!
I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX.

ON DECK.

I.

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
Nothing I ever said with a grace,
Nothing I did that you care to see,
Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

II.

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
Such things have been as a mutual flame.
Your soul's locked fast; but, love for a key,
You might let it loose, till I grew the same
In your eyes, as in mine you stand: strange plea!

III.

For then, then, what would it matter to me
That I was the harsh, ill-favoured one?
We both should be like as pea and pea;
It was ever so since the world begun:
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV.

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and brain,
You, whose least word brought gloom or glee,
Who never lifted the hand in vain
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

V.

Strange, if a face; when you thought of me,
Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright a brow,
Till you saw yourself, while you cried "'Tis She!"

VI.

Well, you may, you must, set down to me
Love that was life, life that was love;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts approve,
A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

VII.

But did one touch of such love for me
Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
Round me and round while life endures,—
Could I fancy "As I feel, thus feels He;"

VIII.

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse hanks of hair,
Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
You might turn myself!—should I know or care,
When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

GOLD HAIR:

A STORY OF PORNIC.

I.

OH, the beautiful girl, too white,
Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

II.

Too white, for the flower of life is red;
Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in heaven instead.

III.

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
One grace that grew to its full on earth:
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so spare,
And her waist want half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

IV.

Hair, such a wonder of flax and floss,
Freshness and fragrance—floods of it, too!
Gold, did I say? Nay, gold's mere dross:
Here, Life smiled, "Think what I meant to do!"
And Love sighed, "Fancy, my loss!"

V.

So, when she ~~died~~, it was scarce more strange
Than that, when ~~some~~ delicate evening dies,
And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
There's a shoot of colour startles the ~~skies~~
With sudden, violent change,—

VI.

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,
As they put the little cross to her lips,
She changed; a spot came out on her cheek,
A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

VII.

"Not my hair!" made the girl her moan—
"All the rest is gone or to go;
"But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
"Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts may know
"Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

VIII.

The passion thus vented, dead lay she;
Her parents sobbed their worst on that,
All friends joined in, nor observed degree:
For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread—not flowing free,

IX.

But curled around her brow, like a crown,
And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck—ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

X.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
'Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its hair:
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
As he planted the crucifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

XI.

And thus was she buried, inviolate
Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar; keeping saintly state
In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

XII.

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,
Though your mouth might twitch with a dubious smile
As they told you of gold both robe and pall,
How she prayed them leave it alone awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

XIII.

Years flew; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed:

XIV.

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not earth;
Had turned an angel before the time:
Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV.

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,
Was taken to pieces: left in the lurch,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI.

'Twas the space where our sires would lay a saint,
A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments quaint,
Dame with chased ring and jewelled rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint;

XVII.

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have done with gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways:
For the boys get pelf, and the town applauds,
And the church deserves the praise:

XVIII.

They grubbed with a will: and at length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cæca, and the rest!—
They found—no gaud they were prying for,
No ring, no rose, but—who would have guessed?—
A double Louis-d'or!

XIX.

Here was a case for the priest: he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, "A little bird
"Chirps in my ear:" then, "Bring a spade,
"Dig deeper!"—he gave the word.

XX.

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged amid
A mint of money, it served for the nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid!

XXI.

Hid there? Why? Could the girl be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront?
Had a spider found out the communion-cup,
Was a toad in the christening-font?

XXII.

Truth is truth: too true it was.
Gold! She hoarded and hugged it first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—alas—
Till the humour grew to a head and burst,
And she cried, at the final pass,—

XXIII.

"Talk not of God, my heart is stone!
"Nor lover nor friend—be gold for both!
"Gold I lack; and, my all, my own,
"It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die loth
"If they let my hair alone!"

XXIV.

Louis-d'ors, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now, do you see? With the priest to shrive,
With parents preventing her soul's release
By kisses that kept alive,—

XXV.

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
For gold, the true sort—"Gold in heaven, if you will;
"But I keep earth's too, I hope."

XXVI.

Enough! The priest took the grave's grim yield:
The parents, they eyed that price of sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place to *bury strangers in*,
The hideous Potter's Field.

XXVII.

But the priest bethought him: "Milk that's spilt'
"—You know the adage! Watch and pray!
"Saints tumble to earth with so slight a tilt!
"It would build a new altar; that, we may!"
And the altar therewith was built.

XXVIII.

Why I deliver this horrible verse?
As the text of a sermon, which now I preach:
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

XXIX.

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

XXX.

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT.

I.

WOULD it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide; not you, the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan, undo!

II.

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
When I found my swan and the cure was plain;
The dull turned bright as I caught your white
On my bosom: you saved me—saved in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all through me!

III.

Yes, all through the speckled beast that I am,
Who taught you to stoop; you gave me yourself,
And bound your soul by the vows that damn
Since on better thought you break, as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram!

IV.

Yes, might I judge you, here were my heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as you pleased!
I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or make;
If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
With the conscience-prick and the memory-smart?

V.

But what will God say? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this thing!
Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
There's a heaven above may deserve your love:
Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or meet?

VI.

And I to have tempted you! I, who tried
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank! Unwise,
I loved, and was lowly, loved and aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you mad,
And you meant to have hated and despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired!

VII.

She, ruined? How? No heaven for her?
Crowns to give, and none for the brow
That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?

VIII.

Hardly! That must be understood!
The earth is your place of penance, then;
And what will it prove? I desire your good,
But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on men,
Nor prove too much for your womanhood.

IX.

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
When you walk alone, and review the past;
And I, who so long shall have done with strife,
And journeyed my stage and earned my wage
And retired as was right,—I am called at last
When the devil stabs you, to lend the knife.

X.

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life long:
For a promise broke, not for first words spoke,
The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI.

Witness beforehand! Off I trip

On a safe path gay through the flowers you flung:
My very name made great by your lip,

And my heart a-glow with the good I know
Of a perfect year when we both were young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

XII.

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but wait!

I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots!
It may be for yourself, when you meditate,

That you grieve—for slain ruth, murdered truth:
"Though falsehood escape in the end, what boots?

"How truth would have triumphed!"—you sigh too
late.

XIII.

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I say!

Well, it is lost now; well, you must bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day:

You should hardly grudge, could I be your judge!
But hush! For you, can be no despair:

There's amends: 'tis a secret: hope and pray!

XIV.

For I was true at ~~least~~—oh, true enough!

And, Dear, truth is not as good as it seems!
Commend me to conscience! Idle stuff!

Much help is in mine, as I mope and pine,
And skulk through day, and scowl in my dreams
At my swan's obtaining the crow's rebuff.

XV.

Men tell me of truth now—"False!" I cry:
Of beauty—"A mask, friend! Look beneath!"
We take our own method, the devil and I,
With pleasant and fair and wise and rare:
And the best we wish to what lives, is—death;
Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie!

XVI.

Far better commit a fault and have done—
As you, Dear!—for ever; and choose the pure,
And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good again,
And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

XVII.

Misery! What shall I say or do?
I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade:
Most like, you are glad you deceived me—rue
No whit of the wrong: you endured too long,
Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance the new.

XVIII.

And your sentence is written all the same,
And I can do nothing,—pray, perhaps:
But somehow the world pursues its game,—
If I pray, if I curse,—for better or worse:
And my faith is torn to a thousand scraps,
And my heart feels ice while my words breathe flame.

XIX.

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.

Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
Be happy! Add but the other grace,

Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
I knew you once: but in Paradise,

If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

DÎS ALITER VISUM;

OR,

LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS.

I.

STOP, let me have the truth of that!

Is that all true? I say, the day
Ten years ago when both of us

Met on a morning, friends—as thus
We meet this evening, friends or what?—

II.

Did you—because I took your arm

And sillily smiled, “A mass of brass
“That sea looks, blazing underneath!”

While up the cliff-road edged with heath,
We took the turns nor came to harm—

III.

Did you consider "Now makes twice

"That I have seen her, walked and talked
"With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,
"Whose worth I weigh: she tries to sing;
"Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice;

IV.

"Reads verse and thinks she understands;

"Loves all, at any rate, that's great,
"Good, beautiful; but much as we
"Down at the bath-house love the sea,
"Who breathe its salt and bruise its sands:

V.

"While . . do but follow the fishing-gull

"That flaps and floats from wave to cave
"There's the sea-lover, fair my friend!
"What then? Be patient, mark and mend
"Had you the making of your scull?"

VI.

And did you, when we faced the church

With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
From human fellowship so far,
Where a few graveyard crosses are,
And garlands for the swallows' perch,—

VII.

Did you determine, as we stepped

O'er the lone stone fence, "Let me get
"Her for myself, and what's the earth
"With all its art, verse, music, worth—
"Compared with love, found, gained, and kept?

VIII.

"Schumann's our music-maker now;
"Has his march-movement youth and mouth?
"Ingres's the modern man that paints;
"Which will lean on me, of his saints?
"Heine for songs; for kisses, how?"

IX.

And did you, when we entered, reached
The votive frigate, soft aloft
Riding on air this hundred years,
Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,—
Did you draw profit while she preached?

X.

Resolving, "Fools we wise men grow!
"Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
"Some question that might find reply
"As prompt in her stopped lips, dropped eye,
"And rush of red to cheek and brow:

XI.

"Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
"Mid the blue weed-flowers round the mound
"Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
"For one more look at baths and bay,
"Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church last—

XII.

"A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and lamed,
"Famous, however, for verse and worse,
"Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
"When gout and glory seat me there,
"So, one whose love-freaks pass unblamed,—

XIII.

"And this young beauty, round and sound
"As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
"With loves and doves, at all events
"With money in the Three per Cents;
"Whose choice of me would seem profound:--

XIV.

"She might take me as I take her.
"Perfect the hour would pass, alas!
"Climb high, love high, what matter? Still,
"Feet, feelings, must descend the hill:
"An hour's perfection can't recur.

XV.

"Then follows Paris and full time
"For both to reason: 'Thus with us!'
"She'll sigh, 'Thus girls give body and soul
"At first word, think they gain the goal,
"When 'tis the starting-place they climb!

XVI.

"My friend makes verse and gets renown;
"Have they all fifty years, his peers?
"He knows the world, firm, quiet and gay;
"Boys will become as much one day:
"They're fools; he cheats, with beard less brown.

XVII.

"For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
"He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
"*I want, who am old and know too much;*
"*I'd catch youth: lend me sight and touch!*
"*Drop heart's blood where life's wheels grate dry!*"

XVIII.

"While I should make rejoinder"—(then
It was, no doubt, you ceased that least
Light pressure of my arm in yours)
"I can conceive of cheaper cures
"For a yawning-fit o'er books and men.

XIX.

"What? All I am, was, and might be,
"All, books taught, art brought, life's whole strife,
"Painful results since precious, just
"Were fitly exchanged, in wise disgust,
"For two cheeks freshened by youth and sea?

XX.

"All for a nosegay!—what came first;
"With fields on flower, untried each side;
"I rally, need my books and men,
"And find a nosegay:' drop it, then,
"No match yet made for best or worst!"

XXI.

That ended me. You judged the porch
We left by, Norman; took our look
At sea and sky; wondered so few
Find out the place for air and view;
Remarked the sun began to scorch;

XXII.

Descended, soon regained the baths,
And then, good-bye! Years ten since then:
Ten years! We meet: you tell me, now,
By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

XXIII.

Now I may speak: you fool, for all

Your lore! WHO made things plain in vain?
What was the sea for? What, the grey

Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

XXIV.

Was there nought better than to enjoy?

No feat which, done, would make time break,
And let us pent-up creatures through

Into eternity, our due?
No forcing earth teach heaven's employ?

XXV.

No wise beginning, here and now,

What cannot grow complete (earth's feat)
And heaven must finish, there and then?

No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

XXVI.

No grasping at love, gaining a share

O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
With death, so, sure of range above

The limits here? For us and love,
Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

XXVII.

This you call wisdom? Thus you add

Good unto good again, in vain?
You loved, with body worn and weak;

I loved, with faculties to seek:
Were both loves worthless since ill-clad?

XXVIII.

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

XXIX.

But what's whole, can increase no more,
Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its sphere.
The devil laughed at you in his sleeve!
You knew not? That I well believe;
Or you had saved two souls: nay, four.

XXX.

For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
Ankle or something. "Pooh," cry you?
At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely; her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE.

I.

HERE was I with my arm and heart
And brain, all yours for a word, a want
Put into a look—just a look, your part,—
While mine, to repay it . . . vainest vaunt,
Were the woman, that's dead, alive to hear,
Had her lover, that's lost, love's proof to show!
But I cannot show it; you cannot speak
From the churchyard neither, miles removed,
Though I feel by a pulse within my cheek,
Which stabs and stops, that the woman I loved
Needs help in her grave and finds none near,
Wants warmth from the heart which sends it—so!

II.

DID I speak once angrily, all the drear days
You lived, you woman I loved so well,
Who married the other? Blame or praise,
Where was the use then? Time would tell,
And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me was the choice of God.

But, Edith dead! no doubting more!
I used to sit and look at my life
As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it: oh, the strife
Of waves at the stone some devil threw
In my life's midcurrent, thwarting God!

III.

But either I thought, "They may churn and chide
"Awhile, my waves which came for their joy
"And found this horrible stone full-tide:
"Yet I see just a thread escape, deploy
"Through the evening-country, silent and safe,
"And it suffers no more till it finds the sea."
Or else I would think, "Perhaps some night
"When new things happen, a meteor-ball
"May slip through the sky in a line of light,
"And earth breathe hard, and landmarks fall,
"And my waves no longer champ nor chafe,
"Since a stone will have rolled from its place: let be!"

IV.

But, dead! All's done with: wait who may,
Watch and wear and wonder who will.
Oh, my whole life that ends to-day!
Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding still,
"The woman is dead, that was none of his;
"And the man, that was none of hers, may go!"

There's only the past left: worry that!

Wreak, like a bull, on the empty coat,
Rage, its late wearer is laughing at!
Tear the collar to rags, having missed his throat;
Strike stupidly on—"This, this and this,
"Where I would that a bosom received the blow!"

v.

I ought to have done more: once my speech,
And once your answer, and there, the end,
And Edith was henceforth out of reach!

Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.
Why, better even have burst like a thief

And borne you away to a rock for us two,
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and brief,
Then changed to myself again—"I slew
"Myself in that moment; a ruffian lies
"Somewhere: your slave, see, born in his place!"

vi.

What did the other do? You be judge!

Look at us, Edith! Here are we both!
Give him his six whole years: I grudge
None of the life with you, nay, I loathe
Myself that I grudged his start in advance
Of me who could overtake and pass.

But, as if he loved you! No, not he,
Nor anyone else in the world, 'tis plain:
Who ever heard that another, free
As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,
Poured life out, proffered it—"Half a glance
"Of those eyes of yours and I drop the glass!"

VII.

Handsome, were you? 'Tis more than they held,
More than they said; I was 'ware and watched:
I was the 'scapegrace, this rat belled
The cat, this fool got his whiskers scratched:
The others? No head that was turned, no heart
Broken, my lady, assure yourself!
Each soon made his mind up; so and so
Married a dancer, such and such
Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
Or maundered, unable to do as much,
And muttered of peace where he had no part:
While, hid in the closet, laid on the shelf,—

VIII.

On the whole, you were let alone, I think!
So, you looked to the other, who acquiesced;
My rival, the proud man,—prize your pink
Of poets! A poet he was! I've guessed:
He rhymed you his rubbish nobody read,
Loved you and doted you—did not I laugh!

There was a prize! But we both were tried.

Oh, heart of mine, marked broad with her mark,
Tekel, found wanting, set aside,

Scorned! See, I bleed these tears in the dark
Till comfort come and the last be bled:

He? He is tagging your epitaph.

IX.

If it would only come over again!

—Time to be patient with me, and probe
This heart till you punctured the proper vein,
Just to learn what blood is: twitch the robe
From that blank lay-figure your fancy draped,
Prick the leathern heart till the—verses spirt!
And late it was easy; late, you walked

Where a friend might meet you; Edith's name
Arose to one's lip if one laughed or talked;

If I heard good news, you heard the same;
When I woke, I knew that your breath escaped;
I could bide my time, keep alive, alert.

X.

And alive I shall keep and long, you will see!

I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
From gutter to cesspool; what cared he

So long as he picked from the filth his prog?
He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
And jollily lived to his hundredth year.

But I will live otherwise: none of such life!
 At once I begin as I mean to end.
 Go on with the world, get gold in its strife,
 Give your spouse the slip and betray your friend!
 There are two who decline, a woman and I,
 And enjoy our death in the darkness here.

XI.

I liked that way you had with your curls
 Wound to a ball in a net behind:
 Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-girl's,
 And your mouth—there was never, to my mind,
 Such a funny mouth, for it would not shut;
 And the dented chin too—what a chin!
 There were certain ways when you spoke, some words
 That you know you never could pronounce:
 You were thin, however; like a bird's
 Your hand seemed—some would say, the pounce,
 Of a scaly-footed hawk—all but!
 The world was right when it called you thin.

XII.

But I turn my back on the world: I take
 Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my lips.
 Bid me live, Edith! Let me slake
 Thirst at your presence! Fear no slips!
 'Tis your slave shall pay, while his soul endures,
 Full due, love's whole debt, *summum jus*.

My queen shall have high observance, planned
 Courtship made perfect, no least line
 Crossed without warrant. There you stand,
 Warm too, and white too: would this wine
 Had washed all over that body of yours,
 Ere I drank it, and you down with it, thus!

ABT VOGLER.

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE MUSICAL
 INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION.)

I.

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I
 build,

Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
 Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when
 Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
 Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,

Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep
 removed,—

Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable

• Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess
 he loved!

II.

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of
mine,

This which my keys in a crowd pressed and impor-
tuned to raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now
and now combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master
his praise!

And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge
down to hell,

Burrow awhile and build. broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my
palace well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent
minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with
many a crest,

Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as
glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the
rest:

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,

When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space
to spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of
my soul was in sight.

IV.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to
match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse
as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort
to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to
scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt
with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wan-
dering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale
nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more
near nor far.

V.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the
glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Pro-
toplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind
should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their
liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through
the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world
worth their new: .

What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall
 be anon;
 And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was
 made perfect too.

VI.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish
 of my soul,
 All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed
 visibly forth,
 All through music and me! For think, had I painted
 the whole,
 Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so
 wonder-worth:
 Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect pro-
 ceeds from cause,
 Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the
 tale is told;
 It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
 Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

VII.

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that
 can,
 Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they
 are!
 And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed
 to man,
 That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth
 sound, but a star.
 Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is
 nought;

It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:

Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and
bow the head!

VIII.

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come
too slow;

For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he
feared,

That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was
to go.

Never to be again! But many more of the kind

As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort
to me?

To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay,
what was, shall be.

IX.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable
Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with
hands!

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the
same?

Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy
power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall
live as before

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much
 good more;
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect
 round.

X.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall
 exist;
 Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good,
 nor power
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
 melodist
 When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
 The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth
 too hard,
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in
 the sky,
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
 Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-
 and-by.

XI.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or
 agonized?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing
 might issue thence?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should
 be prized?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal
 and woe.

But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians
know.

XII.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the
deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-
place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA.

I.

GROW old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
"Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be
afraid!"

II.

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,
"Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
"Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends
them all!"

III.

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-
crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the
throe!

VII.

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

VIII.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and
learn?"

X.

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
"I see the whole design,
"I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too:
"Perfect I call Thy plan:
"Thanks that I was a man!
"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt
do!"

XI.

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,---gain most, as we did best!

XII.

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
"I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh
helps soul!"

XIII.

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

XIV.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

XV.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

XVI.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey.
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

XVII.

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiescence vain:
"The Future I may face now I have proved the
Past."

XVIII.

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true
play.

XIX.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made!
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

XX.

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

XXI.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at
last!

XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my soul believe?

XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount:

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.

XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize
to-day!"

XXVII.

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay
endure.

XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Scully-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

XXX.

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou
with earth's wheel?

XXXI.

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

XXXII.

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

A DEATH IN THE DESERT.

[SUPPOSED of Pamphylax the Antiochene:
It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek,
And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu*:
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,
Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,
Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *Xi*,
From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace:
Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own name,
I may not write it, but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the rest,
And leave off here: beginneth Pamphylax.]

I said, "If one should wet his lips with wine,
"And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we find,
"Or else the lappet of a linen robe,
"Into the water-vessel, lay it right,
"And cool his forehead just above the eyes,
"The while a brother, kneeling either side,
"Should chafe each hand and try to make it warm,-
"He is not so far gone but he might speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock,

Where, sixty days since the decree was out,
We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while;
But in the midmost grotto: since noon's light
Reached there a little, and we would not lose
The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,
And brought him from the chamber in the depths,
And laid him in the light where we might see:
For certain smiles began about his mouth,
And his lids moved, presageful of the end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o' the cave,
The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat
That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive:
So that if any thief or soldier passed,
(Because the persecution was aware)
Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,
Such man might pass on, joyful at a prize,
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.
Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—dropped a drop;
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,
Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy his left:
But Valens had bethought him, and produced
And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—turn
And smile a little, as a sleeper does

If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept:
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees, and ran,
Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought,
And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead
Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth proclaiming first,
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word:
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,
As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, "If a friend declared to me,
"This my son Valens, this my other son,
"Were James and Peter,—nay, declared as well
"This lad was very John,—I could believe!
"—Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe:
"So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
"The soul retreated from the perished brain
"Whence it was wont to feel and use the world
"Through these dull members, done with long ago.
"Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:
"And there is nothing lost. Let be, awhile!"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,
How divers persons witness in each man,
Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit,
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,
And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward: but, tending upward for advice,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what Knows:
Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
And leans upon the former, makes it play,
As that played off the first: and, tending up,
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man
I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, "A stick, once fire from end to end;
"Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark!
"Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
"A little where the fire was: thus I urge
"The soul that served me, till it task once more
"What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,
"And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,
"Trying to taste again the truth of things—"
(He smiled)—"their very superficial truth;

"As that ye are my sons, that it is long
"Since James and Peter had release by death,
"And I am only he, your brother John,
"Who saw and heard, and could remember all.
"Remember all! It is not much to say.
"What if the truth broke on me from above
"As once and oft-times? Such might hap again:
"Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,
"With head wool-white, eyes, flame, and feet like brass,
"The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen—
"I who now shudder only and surmise
"How did your brother bear that sight and live?"

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love
"Through me to men: be nought but ashes here
"That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—
"Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
"No one alive who knew (consider this!)
"—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
"That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
"How will it be when none more saith 'I saw?'

"Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.
"Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden teach,
"I went, for many years, about the world,
"Saying 'It was so; so I heard and saw,'
"Speaking as the case asked: and men believed.
"Afterward came the message to myself
"In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,
"But simply listen, take a book and write,
"Nor set down other than the given word,
"With nothing left to my arbitrament

"To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.
"Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,
"No call to write again, I found a way,
"And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught
"Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength, believe,
"Or I would pen a letter to a friend
"And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more:
"Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.
"But at the last, why, I seemed left alive
"Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
"To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
"When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things;
"Left to repeat, 'I saw, I heard, I knew,'
"And go all over the old ground again,
"With Antichrist already in the world,
"And many Antichrists, who answered prompt
"‘Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?
"‘Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget:
"‘Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe?’
"I never thought to call down fire on such,
"Or, as in wonderful and early days,
"Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;
"But patient stated much of the Lord's life
"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:
"Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
"Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
"Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
"Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
"Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
"Of new significance and fresh result;
"What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
"And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
"For men said, 'It is getting long ago.'

"Where is the promise of His coming?"—asked
"These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
"Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
"I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
"Since I was there, and helpful in my age;
"And, in the main, I think such men believed.
"Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
"Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
"And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
"Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
"We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
"Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
"As I had slidden down and fallen afar.
"Past even the presence of my former self,
"Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
"Till I am found away from my own world,
"Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
"Along with unborn people in strange lands,
"Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—
"Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
"Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!"

"And how shall I assure them? Can they share
"—They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
"About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
"Living and learning still as years assist
"Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—
"With me who hardly am withheld at all,
"But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
"Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
"Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
"We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
"To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death

"Of which I wrote 'it was'—to me, it is;
"—Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.
"Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
"Is not His love at issue still with sin,
"Visibly ~~when~~ a wrong is done on earth?
"Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?
"Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
"To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
"When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,
"And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
"See I the need ~~yet~~ transiency of both,
"The good and glory consummated thence?
"I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak,
"Resume the Power: and in this word 'I see,'
"Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both
"That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds
"His eye and bids him look. These are, I see;
"But ye, the children, His beloved ones too,
"Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass
"I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,
"It had been given a crafty smith to make;
"A tube, he turned on objects brought too close,
"Lying confusedly insubordinate
"For the unassisted eye to master once:
"Look through his tube, at distance now they lay,
"Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear!
"Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth
"I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
"Diminished into clearness, proved a point
"And far away: ye would withdraw your sense
"From out eternity, strain it upon time,
"Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death,
"Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,

"As though a star should open out, all sides,
"Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
"And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
"Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
"How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
"And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
"Such prize despite the envy of the world,
"And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.
"But see the double way wherein we are led,
"How the soul learns diversely from the flesh!
"With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
"And yields mere basement for the soul's emprise,
"Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
"And warmth was cherishing and food was choice
"To every man's flesh, thousand years ago,
"As now to yours and mine; the body sprang
"At once to the height, and stayed: but the soul,—no!
"Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
"In Rome or Athens, may descry some point
"Of the eternal power, hid yestereve;
"And as thereby the power's whole mass extends
"So much extends the æther floating o'er
"The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.
"Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these
"Till earth's work stop and useless time run out,
"So duly, daily, needs provision be
"For keeping the soul's prowess possible,
"Building new barriers as the old decay,
"Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
"Putting the question ever, 'Does God love,
"And will ye hold that truth against the world?'

"Ye know there needs no second proof with good
"Gained for our flesh from any earthly source:
"We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,
"Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
"And guard it safe through every chance, ye know!
"That fable of Prometheus and his theft,
"How mortals gained Jove's fiery flower, grows old
"(I have been used to hear the pagans own)
"And out of mind; but fire, howe'er its birth,
"Here is it, precious to the sophist now
"Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,
"As precious to those satyr's of his play,
"Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
"While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
"Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
"To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
"Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth
"Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,
"Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire
"For gold or purple once he knows its worth?
"Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?
"Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,
"Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,
"And straightway in his life acknowledge it,
"As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
"Sigh ye, 'It had been easier once than now?'
"To give you answer I am left alive;
"Look at me who was present from the first!
"Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,
"My first, befitting me who so had seen:
"Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
"Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
"What should wring this from thee!'—ye laugh and ask.

"What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,
"The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
"And fear of what the Jews might do! Just that,
"And it is written, 'I forsook and fled:'
"There was my trial, and it ended thus.
"Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow:
"Another year or two,—what little child,
"What tender woman that had seen no least
"Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
"Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
"Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?
"Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.
"Already had begun the silent work
"Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
"Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt;
"Teachers were busy, whispering 'All is true
"As the aged ones report; but youth can reach
"Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
"And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.'
"Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,
"A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
"Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
"This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
"Till imminent was the outcry 'Save our Christ!'
"Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.
"Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?
"What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
"Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
"Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!

"Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
"And may I help to bear it with you all.

"Using my weakness which becomes your strength?
"For if a babe were born inside this grot,
"Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
"Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's place,—
"One loving him and wishful he should learn,
"Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
"Month by month here, so made to understand
"How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:
"I think I could explain to such a child
"There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,
"Ay, nor need urge 'I saw it, so believe!'
"It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
"In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,
"Left without me, which must be very soon.
"What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!
"I see you stand conversing, each new face,
"Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,
"On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;
"Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico
"Out of the crowd in some enormous town
"Where now the larks sing in a solitude;
"Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand
"Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:
"And no one asks his fellow any more
"‘Where is the promise of His coming?’ but
"‘Was He revealed in any of His lives,
"‘As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul?’

"Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,
"And let us ask and answer and be saved!
"My book speaks on, because it cannot pass;
"One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads
"‘Here is a tale of things done ages since;

“What truth was ever told the second day?
“Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.
“Remains the doctrine, love; well, we must love,
“And what we love most, power and love in one,
“Let us acknowledge on the record here,
“Accepting these in Christ: must Christ then be?
“Has He been? Did not we ourselves make Him?
“Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.
“First of the love, then; we acknowledge Christ—
“A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
“We had such love already in ourselves,
“Knew first what else we should not recognise.
“’Tis mere projection from man’s inmost mind,
“And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
“Becomes accounted somewhat out of him;
“He throws it up in air, it drops down earth’s,
“With shape, name, story added, man’s old way.
“How prove you Christ came otherwise at least?
“Next try the power: He made and rules the world:
“Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,
“Unless things have been ever as we see.
“Our sires declared a charioteer’s yoked steeds
“Brought the sun up the east and down the west,
“Which only of itself now rises, sets,
“As if a hand impelled it and a will,—
“Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands:
“But the new question’s whisper is distinct,
“Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves?
“We have the hands, the will; what made and drives
“The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,
“While will and love we do know; marks of these,
“Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—
“As that, to punish or reward our race,

“‘The sun at undue times arose or set
“‘Or else stood still: what do not men affirm?
“‘But earth requires as urgently reward
“‘Or punishment to-day as years ago,
“‘And none expects the sun will interpose:
“‘Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
“‘Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
“‘Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things;
“‘Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
“‘Man’s!—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
“‘As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
“‘To help these in what forms he called his gods.
“‘First, Jove’s brow, Juno’s eyes were swept away,
“‘But Jove’s wrath, Juno’s pride continued long;
“‘As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
“‘So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
“‘What proveth God is otherwise at least?
“‘All else, projection from the mind of man!’

“Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
“But place my gospel where I put my hands.

“I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
“That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
“Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
“For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
“This imports solely, man should mount on each
“New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
“The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
“Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
“Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
“Whereat earth’s ladder drops, its service done;
“And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.

"You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
"To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
"And check the careless step would spoil their birth;
"But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,
"Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,
"It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
"Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
"But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
"For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
"Nor miracles need prove it any more.
"Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware
"At first of root and stem, saved both till now
"From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
"What? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,
"And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?
"No!—grown, his growth lasts; taught, he ne'er forgets:
"May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

"This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

"I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
"Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
"So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:
"When they can eat, babe's nurture is withdrawn.
"I fed the babe whether it would or no:
"I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
"I cried once, 'That ye may believe in Christ,
"Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!'
"I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*
"And smile at stories how John's word could cure—
"Repeat that miracle and take my faith?'
"I say, that miracle was duly wrought
"When, save for it, no faith was possible.

"Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,

"Whether the change came from our minds which see

"Of shows o' the world so much as and no more

"Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I

"See now, suppose you, there where you see rock

"Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,

"So faith grew, making void more miracles

"Because too much: they would compel, not help.

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ

"Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee

"All questions in the earth and out of it,

"And has so far advanced thee to be wise.

"Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?

"In life's mere minute, with power to use' that proof,

"Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?

"Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!

"For I say, this is death and the sole death,

"When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,

"Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,

"And lack of love from love made manifest;

"A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes;

"A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.

"With ignorance was surety of a cure.

"When man, appalled at nature, questioned first

"'What if there lurk a might behind this might?'

"He needed satisfaction God could give,

"And did give, as ye have the written word:

"But when he finds might still redouble might,

"Yet asks, 'Since all is might, what use of will?'

"—Will, the one source of might,—he being man

"With a man's will and a man's might, to teach

"In little how the two combine in large,—
"That man has turned round on himself and stands,
"Which in the course of nature is, to die.

"And when man questioned, 'What if there be love
"Behind the will and might, as real as they?'—
"He needed satisfaction God could give,
"And did give, as ye have the written word:
"But when, beholding that love everywhere,
"He reasons, 'Since such love is everywhere,
"And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
"We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,'—
"How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
"That he must love and would be loved again,
"Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
"Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
"The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
"Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

"If he rejoin, 'But this was all the while
"A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
"Thy story of the places, names and dates,
"Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
"—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
"Whence now the second suffers detriment.
"What good of giving knowledge if, because
"O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
"And why refuse what modicum of help
"Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
"I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
"Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
"Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
"And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,

"Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
"And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
"Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
"Put question of his famous play again
"How for the ephemerals' sake, Jove's fire was filched,
"And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
"*The fact is in the fable, cry the wise,*
"*Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,*
"*Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.*
"As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
"Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
"Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?"

"I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
"The very primal thesis, plainest law,
"—Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
"A master to obey, a course to take,
"Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
"Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
"From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
"From what once seemed good, to what now proves
 best.
"How could man have progression otherwise?
"Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'
"No savage man inquired 'What am myself?'
"Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
"Man takes that title now if he believes
"Might can exist with neither will nor love,
"In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
"While in himself he recognises love
"No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
"Since if man prove the sole existent thing
"Where these combine, whatever their degree,

"However weak the might or will or love,
"So they be found there, put in evidence,—
"He is as surely higher in the scale
"Than any might with neither love nor will,
"As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
"(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
"Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self—
"Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!
"Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,
"And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
"The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,
"His life becomes impossible, which is death.

"But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
"He is mere man, and in humility
"Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
"I point to the immediate consequence
"And say, by such confession straight he falls
"Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
"Made to know that he can know and not more:
"Lower than God who knows all and can all,
"Higher than beasts which know and can so far
"As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
"Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
"While man knows partly but conceives beside,
"Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
"And in this striving, this converting air
"Into a solid he may grasp and use,
"Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
"Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
"Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
"Such progress could no more attend his soul
"Were all it struggles after found at first

"And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
"Than motion wait his body, were all else
"Than it the solid earth on every side,
"Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
"Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
"He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
"What he considers that he knows to-day,
"Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown;
"Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
"Because he lives, which is to be a man,
"Set to instruct himself by his past self:
"First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
"Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
"Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
"And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
"As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
"The statuary ere he mould a shape
"Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
"The aspiration to produce the same;
"So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,
"Cries ever 'Now I have the thing I see:'
"Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,
"From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.
"How were it had he cried 'I see no face,
" 'No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay?'
"Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,
"And laughed 'It is my shape and lives again!'
"Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,
"Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed
"In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
"Right in you, right in him, such way be man's!
"God only makes the live shape at a jet.

"Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?
"The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
"Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;
"But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
"Serve still and are replaced as time requires:
"By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!
"If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
"Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,
"Indulging every instinct of the soul
"There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

"Such is the burthen of the latest time.
"I have survived to hear it with my ears,
"Answer it with my lips: does this suffice?
"For if there be a further woe than such,
"Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,
"So long as any pulse is left in mine,
"May I be absent even longer yet,
"Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,
"Though I should tarry a new hundred years!"

But he was dead: 'twas about noon, the day
Somewhat declining: we five buried him
That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,
And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.
Valens is lost, I know not of his trace;
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,
And could not write nor speak, but only loved:
So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,
I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe!

For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world; they err:
Either mistaking what was darkly spoke
At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech
Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.
Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard!
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this:

"If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
"Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—
"Account Him, for reward of what He was,
"Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
"For see; Himself conceived of life as love,
"Conceived of love as what must enter in,
"Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved:
"Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.
"Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.
"But by this time are many souls set free,
"And very many still retained alive:
"Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,
"Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)
"See if, for every finger of thy hands,
"There be not found, that day the world shall end,
"Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word
"That He will grow incorporate with all,
"With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,

"Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?
"Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.
"Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
"Or lost!"

But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS;

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND.

[WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin;
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh;
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web,
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.

Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.}]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!

'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;
Only she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.
'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;

Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate; as well have made Himself,
He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains;
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
And throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,

And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the manikin three legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, This bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,

But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,
And must submit: what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
"I make the cry my maker cannot make
"With his great round mouth; he must blow through
mine!"

Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.
But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
'That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
'There may be something quiet o'er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up,— the worse for those
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,

Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips do grapes.
'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,

Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an orc's armour? Ay,—so spoil His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
By no means for the love of what is worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm

With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
And licked the whole labour flat: so much for spite.
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?
Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;
Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most
When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:
'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways please.
But what would move my choler more than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days to come,
Saying forsooth in the inmost of its heart,
"Because he did so yesterday with me,
"And otherwise with such another brute,
"So must he do henceforth and always."—Ay?

'Would teach the reasoning couple what "must" means!
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:
Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,
Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now

Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, "*What I hate, be consecrate*
"To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
"For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?"
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that hath told Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there,
there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!]

CONFESSIONS.

I.

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
 "Now that I come to die,
 "Do I view the world as a vale of tears?"
 Ah, reverend sir, not I!

II.

What I viewed there once, what I view again
 Where the physic bottles stand
 On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
 With a wall to my bedside hand.

III.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
 From a house you could descry
 O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue
 Or green to a healthy eye?

IV.

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
 Blue above lane and wall;
 And that farthest bottle labelled "Ether"
 Is the house o'er-topping all.

V.

At a terrace, somewhat near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind 's out of tune.

VI.

Only, there was a way . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house "The Lodge."

VII.

What right had a lounger up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII.

Yet never catch her and me together,
*As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether,"
And stole from stair to stair,

IX.

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

MAY AND DEATH.

I.

I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III.

So, for their sake, be May still May!
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me: I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

IV.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

V.

That, they might spare; a certain wood
Might miss the plant; their loss were small:
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

DEAF AND DUMB.

A GROUP BY WOOLNER.

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white;
So may a glory from defect arise:
Only by Deafness may the vexed Love wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
As favoured mouth could never, through the eyes.

PROSPICE.

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,

The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS.

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON.

BUT give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
Let them once more absorb me! One look now
Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:
Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied,—no past is mine, no future: look at me!

YOUTH AND ART.

I.

It once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

II.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbbed, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed "They will see some day
"Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

III.

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
"Kate Brown's on the boards ere long
"And Grisi's existence embittered!"

IV.

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

V.

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's windows.

VI.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

VII.

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

VIII.

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eyes' tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

IX.

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

X.

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Or thanks in a look, or sing it?

XI.

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

XII.

But I think I gave you as good!
"That foreign fellow,—who can know
"How she pays, in a playful mood,
"For his tuning her that piano?"

XIII.

Could you say so, and never say
"Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
"And I fetch her from over the way,
"Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?"

XIV.

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

XV.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

XVI.

Each life unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

XVII.

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE.

IF one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

A LIKENESS.

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup:
And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
Asks, "Who was the lady, I wonder?"
"Tis a daub John bought at a sale,"
Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder:
"What a shade beneath her nose!
"Snuff-taking, I suppose,—"
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there's no wife in the case,
But the portrait's queen of the place,
Alone mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist ("not, alas! mine,
"But my master's, the Tipton Slasher")
And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns ("shot in the Chablais")
And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
And the little edition of Rabelais:

Where a friend, with both hands in his pockets,
May saunter up close to examine it,
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb in it,
"But the eyes are half out of their sockets;
"That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
"But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis:
"Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
"What, is not she Jane? Then, who is she?"

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint
Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
In women I've seen the face of:
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fifty in one portfolio.
When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
'Taste the good fruits of our leisure
Talk about pencil and lyre,
And the National Portrait Gallery:
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we've turned over twenty,
And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—"Festina lentè!"

"What's that sweet thing there, the etching?"
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
How my cheeks grow red as tomatos,
How my heart leaps! But hearts, after leaps, ache.

"By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
"That other, you praised, of Volpato's."
The fool! would he try a flight further and say—
He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—why, I'll not
engage
But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,
I should toss him the thing's self—"Tis only a du-
plicate,
"A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!"

MR. SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM."

Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once!
This was the first and only time, I'll swear,—
Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only time,
I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted mother, sir!)
All, except this last accident, was truth—
This little kind of slip!—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good champagne,
(I took it for Catawba, you're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head!

"Get up!"

You still inflict on me that terrible face?
You show no mercy?—Not for Her dear sake,
The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even now
Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel something, sir?)
You'll tell?

Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie!
Please, sir! your thumbs are through my windpipe, sir!
Ch—ch!

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
When your departed mother spoke those words
Of peace through me, and moved you, sir, so much,
You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them back again,
Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so soon
A trifle of trick, all through a glass too much
Of his own champagne, would change my best of
 friends
Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 'twas wrong.
I don't contest the point; your anger's just:
Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 'twas wicked of me. There's a thick
Dusk undeveloped spirit (I've observed)
Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,
Or else an Irish emigrant's; yourself

Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,
When we had summoned Franklin to clear up
A point about those shares i' the telegraph:
Ay, and he swore . . or might it be Tom Paine?
Thumping the table close by where I crouched,
He'd do me soon a mischief: that's come true!
Why, now your face clears! I was sure it would!
Then, this one time . . don't take your hand away,
Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . .
You'll promise to forgive me?—or, at least,
Tell nobody of this? Consider, sir!
What harm can mercy do? Would but the shade
Of the venerable dead-one just vouchsafe
A rap or tip! What bit of paper's here?
Suppose we take a pencil, let her write,
Make the least sign, she urges on her child
Forgiveness? There now! Eh? Oh! 'Twas your foot,
And not a natural creak, sir?

Answer, then!

Once, twice, thrice . . see, I'm waiting to say "thrice!"
All to no use? No sort of hope for me?
It's all to post to Greeley's newspaper?

What? If I told you all about the tricks?
Upon my soul!—the whole truth, and nought else,
And how there's been some falsehood—for your part,
Will you engage to pay my passage out,
And hold your tongue until I'm safe on board?
England 's the place, not Boston—no offence!
I see what makes you hesitate: don't fear!
I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,
Yes, this time really it's upon my soul!

Be my salvation!—under Heaven, of course.
I'll tell some queer things. Sixty Vs must do.
A trifle, though, to start with! We'll refer
The question to this table?

How you're changed!
Then split the difference; thirty more, we'll say.
Ay, but you leave my presents! Else I'll swear
'Twas all through those: you wanted yours again,
So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back
Tread on a worm, it turns, sir! If I turn,
Your fault! 'Tis you'll have forced me! Who's obliged
To give up life yet try no self-defence?
At all events, I'll run the risk. Eh?

Done!

May I sit, sir? This dear old table, now!
Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar!
I've been so happy with you! Nice stuffed chairs,
And sympathetic sideboards; what an end
To all the instructive evenings! (It's alight.)
Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.
Here goes,—but keep your temper or I'll scream!

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol!
You see, sir, it's your own fault more than mine;
It's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk!
You're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,
So clever, while you cling by half a claw
To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,
Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch
Because you chose it, so it must be safe.
Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough! You spy

Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,
Wanting real foothold,—who can't keep upright
On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you:
There's no outwitting you respecting him!
For instance, men love money—that, you know—
And what men do to gain it: well, suppose
A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,
Listening at keyholes, hears the company
Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so forth,
How hard they are to get, how good to hold,
How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in pops he—
"I've got a V-note!"—what do you say to him?
What's your first word which follows your last kick?
"Where did you steal it, rascal?" That's because
He finds you, fain would fool you, off your perch,
Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir,
Elected your parade-ground: let him try
Lies to the end of the list,—“He picked it up,
“His cousin died and left it him by will,
“The President flung it to him, riding by,
“An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair,
“He dreamed of luck and found his shoe enriched,
“He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold”—
How would you treat such possibilities?
Would not you, prompt, investigate the case
With cow-hide? “Lies, lies, lies,” you'd shout: and
why?
Which of the stories might not prove mere truth?
This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin!
Let's see, now, give him me to speak for him!
How many of your rare philosophers,
In plaguy books I've had to dip into,
Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made

And made it? Oh, with such philosophers
 You're on your best behaviour! While the lad —
 With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods,
 Nor doubt a moment how he got his prize:
 In his case, you hear, judge and execute,
 All in a breath: so would most men of sense.

But let the same lad hear you talk as grand
 At the same keyhole, you and company,
 Of signs and wonders, the invisible world;
 How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
 More than our vulgarest incredulity;
 How good men have desired to see a ghost,
 What Johnson used to say, what Wesley did,
 Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-dee: —
 If he then break in with, "Sir, *I* saw a ghost!"
 Ah, the ways change! He finds you perched and prim;
 It's a conceit of yours that ghosts may be:
 There's no talk now of cow-hide. "Tell it out!
 "Don't fear us! Take your time and recollect!
 "Sit down first: try a glass of wine, my boy!
 "And, David, (is not that your Christian name?)
 "Of all things, should this happen twice—it may —
 "Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let us know!"
 Does the boy blunder, blurt out this, blab that,
 Break down in the other, as beginners will?
 All's candour, all's considerateness—"No haste!
 "Pause and collect yourself! We understand!
 "That's the bad memory, or the natural shock,
 "Or the unexplained *phenomena!*"

Egad,

The boy takes heart of grace; finds, never fear,

The readiest way to ope your own heart wide,
Show—what I call your peacock-perch, pet post
To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk upon!
"Just as you thought, much as you might expect!
"There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,"..
And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate?
If he ruffle a feather, it's "Gently, patiently!
"Manifestations are so weak at first!
"Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short,
"Cures with a vengeance!"

There, sir, that's your style!
You and your boy—such pains bestowed on him,
Or any headpiece of the average worth,
To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him apace,
Make him a Person ("Porson?" thank you, sir!)
Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
You never leave the lesson! Fire alight,
Catch you permitting it to die! You've friends;
'There's no withholding knowledge,—least from those
Apt to look elsewhere for their souls' supply:
Why should not you parade your lawful prize?
Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth
Gives it his name, grows notable: how much more,
Who ferrets out a "medium?" "David's yours,
"You highly-favoured man? Then, pity souls
"Less privileged! Allow us share your luck!"
So, David holds the circle, rules the roast,
Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,
Sets-to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise—
Though I say, "lies" all these, at this first stage,
'Tis just for science' sake: I call such grubs
By the name of what they'll turn to, dragonflies.
Strictly, it's what good people style untruth;
But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown thing:
It's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-work—
What never meant to be so very bad—
The knack of story-telling, brightening up
Each dull old bit of fact that drops its shine.
One does see somewhat when one shuts one's eyes,
If only spots and streaks; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves: and pens, good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?
'Tis but a foot in the water and out again;
Not that duck-under which decides your dive.
Note this, for it's important: listen why.

I'll prove, you push on David till he dives
And ends the shivering. Here's your circle, now:
Two-thirds of them, with heads like you their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,
"Lord, who'd have thought it!" But there's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits
"Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
"But—do you feel so certain of that boy's?
"Really, I wonder! I confess myself
"More chary of my faith!" That's galling, sir!
What, he the investigator, he the sage,
When all's done? Then, you just have shut your eyes,
Opened your mouth, and gulped down David whole,
You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,

And doubled besides; once more, "He heard, we heard,

"You and they heard, your mother and your wife,
"Your children and the stranger in your gates:
"Did they or did they not?" So much for him,
The black sheep, guest without the wedding-garb,
And doubting Thomas! Now's your turn to crow:
"He's kind to think you such a fool: Sludge cheats?
"Leave you alone to take precautions!"

Straight

The rest join chorus. Thomas stands abashed,
Sips silent some such beverage as this,
Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
And gulping David in good fellowship,
Than going elsewhere, getting, in exchange,
With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
Some just as tough a morsel. Over the way,
Holds Captain Sparks his court: is it better there?
Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-scenes,
And Mexican War exploits to swallow plump
If you'd be free o' the stove-side, rocking-chair,
And trio of affable daughters?

Doubt succumbs!

Victory! All your circle's yours again!
Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
David's performance rounds, each chink gets patched,
Every protrusion of a point's filed fine,
All's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
And then return to David finally,
Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-inch.
Here's a choice birth o' the supernatural,
Poor David's pledged to! You've employed no tool
That laws exclaim at, save the devil's own,

Yet screwed him into henceforth gulling you
To the top o' your bent,—all out of one half-lie!

You hold, if there's one half or a hundredth part
Of a lie, that's his fault,—his be the penalty!
I dare say! You'd prove firmer in his place?
You'd find the courage,—that first flurry over,
'That mild bit of romancing-work at end,—
'To interpose with "It gets serious, this;
'Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at all.
'Inform your friends I made . . well, fools of them,
'And found you ready made. I've lived in clover
'These three weeks: take it out in kicks of me!"
I doubt it. Ask your conscience! Let me know,
Twelve months hence, with how few embellishments
You've told almighty Boston of this passage
Of arms between us, your first taste o' the foil
From Sludge who could not fence, sir! Sludge, your
boy!

I lied, sir,—there! I got up from my gorge
On offal in the gutter, and preferred
Your canvass-backs: I took their carver's size,
Measured his modicum of intelligence,
Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
With a raven feather, and next week found myself
Sweet and clean, dining daintily, dizen'd smart,
Set on a stool buttressed by ladies' knees,
Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
Encouraging my story to uncoil
And creep out from its hole, inch after inch,
"How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
"Tucked up, just as they left me,—than came raps!
"While a light whisked" . . "Shaped somewhat like a star?"

"Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am." — "So we thought!

"And any voice? Not yet? Try hard, next time,

"If you can't hear a voice; we think you may:

"At least, the Pennsylvanian 'mediums' did."

Oh, next time comes the voice! "Just as we hoped!"

Are not the hopers proud now, pleased, profuse

O' the natural acknowledgment?

Of course!

So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the boat,

On we sweep with a cataract ahead,

We're midway to the Horse-shoe: stop, who can,

The dance of bubbles gay about our prow!

Experiences become worth waiting for,

Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost mind,

And compliment the "medium" properly,

Concern themselves about his Sunday coat,

See rings on his hand with pleasure. Ask yourself

How you'd receive a course of treats like these!

Why, take the quietest hack and stall him up,

Cram him with corn a month, ~~then~~ out with him

Among his mates on a bright April morn,

With the turf to tread; see if you find or no

A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!

Much more a youth whose fancies sprout as rank

As toadstool-clump from melon-bed. 'Tis soon,

"Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and carry,

"Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and hang yourself!"

I'm spared all further trouble; all's arranged;

Your circle does my business; I may rave

Like an epileptic dervish in the books,

Foam, fling myself flat, rend my clothes to shreds;

No matter: lovers, friends and countrymen
 Will lay down spiritual laws, read wrong things right
 By the rule o' reverse. If Francis Verulam
 Styles himself Bacon, spells the name beside
 With a *y* and a *k*, says he drew breath in York,
 Gave up the ghost in Wales when Cromwell reigned,
 (As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt to say,
 Before I found the useful book that knows)
 Why, what harm's done? The circle smiles apace,
 "It was not Bacon, after all, do you see!
 "We understand; the trick's but natural:
 "Such spirits" individuality
 "Is hard to put in evidence: they incline
 "To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped sorts.
 "You see, their world's much like a jail broke loose,
 "While this of ours remains shut, bolted, barred,
 "With a single window to it. Sludge, our friend,
 "Serves as this window, whether thin or thick,
 "Or stained or stainless; he's the medium-pane
 "Through which, to see us and be seen, they peep:
 "They crowd each other, hustle for a chance,
 "Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play tricks enough!
 "Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve aside?
 "Up in his place jumps Barnum—"I'm your man,
 "'I'll answer you for Bacon!' Try once more!"

Or else it's—"What's a 'medium?' He's a means,
 "Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
 "Spirits can speak by; he may misconceive,
 "Stutter and stammer,—he's their Sludge and drudge,
 "Take him or leave him; they must hold their peace,
 "Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
 "To half-expression, through his ignorance.

"Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
 "New music he's brimful of; why, he turns
 "The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
 "And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
 "As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now!)
 "Comes from the hopper as bran-new Sludge, nought
 else,
 "The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F,
 "Or the 'Stars and Stripes' set to consecutive fourths."

Sir, where's the scrape you did not help me through,
 You that are wise? And for the fools, the folk
 Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word!)
 Pray do you find guests criticise your wine,
 Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose?
 Then, why your "medium?" What's the difference?
 Prove your madeira red-ink and gamboge,—
 Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody's a goose
 For vaunting both as genuine. "Guests!" Don't fear!
 They'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,
 And leave you in your glory.

"No, sometimes

"They doubt and say as much!" Ay, doubt they do!
 And what's the consequence? "Of course they doubt"—
 (You triumph) "that explains the hitch at once!
 "Doubt posed our 'medium,' puddled his pure mind;
 "He gave them back their rubbish: pitch chaff in,
 "Could flour come out o' the honest mill?" So, prompt
 Applaud the faithful: cases flock in point,
 "How, when a mocker willed a 'medium' once
 "Should name a spirit James whose name was George,
 "'James' cried the 'medium,'—'twas the test of truth!"

In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves more.
Does this convince? The better: does it fail?
Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—
The grand means, last resource. Look black and big!
“You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short?
“Accomplices in rascality: this we hear
“In our own house, from our invited guest
“Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy
“Exposed by our good faith! Have you been heard?
“Now, then, hear us; one man’s not quite worth twelve.
“You see a cheat? Here’s some twelve see an ass:
“Excuse me if I calculate: good day!”
Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode,
Sludge waves his hat in triumph!

Or—he don’t.

There’s something in real truth (explain who can!)
One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won’t munch
Because he spies a corn-bag: hang that truth,
It spoils all dainties proffered in its place!
I’ve felt at times when, cockered, cossetted
And coddled by the aforesaid company,
Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,
But o’er their shoulders spit at the flying man,—
I’ve felt a child; only, a fractious child
That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grandmother,
Who keep him from the kennel, sun and wind,
Good fun and wholesome mud,—enjoined be sweet,
And comely and superior,—eyes askance
The ragged sons o’ the gutter at their game,
Fain would be down with them i’ the thick o’ the filth,
Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking plain,

And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
Huggings and humbug—gnashed my teeth to mark
A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say,
Ruining a soul so!

But what's "so," what's fixed,
Where may one stop? Nowhere! The cheating's nursed
Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon enough:
But you're for progress. "All old, nothing new?
"Only the usual talking through the mouth,
"Or writing by the hand? I own, I thought
"This would develop, grow demonstrable,
"Make doubt absurd, give figures we might see,
"Flowers we might touch. There's no one doubts you,
Sludge!
"You dream the dreams, you see the spiritual sights,
"The speeches come in your head, beyond dispute.
"Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all mouths,
"We want some outward manifestation!—well,
"The Pennsylvanians gained such; why not Sludge?
"He may improve with time!"

Ay, that he may!
He sees his lot: there's no avoiding fate.
"Tis a trifle at first. "Eh, David? Did you hear?
"You jogged the table, your foot caused the squeak,
"This time you're . . . joking, are you not, my boy?"
"N-n-no!"—and I'm done for, bought and sold hence-
forth.
The old good easy jog-trot way, the . . . eh?
The . . . not so very false, as falsehood goes,

The spinning out and drawing fine, you know,—
Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
Surely not downright cheater, —any how,
'Tis done with and my lot cast; Cheat's my name:
The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
Has settled what you'll have the souchong's smack:
The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it's so cruel easy! Oh, those tricks
That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,
Clearly no common conjuror's!—no, indeed!
A conjuror? Choose me any craft i' the world
A man puts hand to; and with six months' pains,
I'll play you 'twenty tricks miraculous
To people untaught the trade: have you seen glass
blown,
Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
To the oven? Try and do it! Take my word,
Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe,
To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove
At end o' your slipper,—then put out the lights
And . . . there, there, all you want you'll get, I hope!
I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again! I've done my part,
You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
"Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your verdict, sir?
"You, hardest head in the United States,—
"Did you detect a cheat here? Wait! Let's see!

"Just an experiment first, for candour's sake!
"I'll try and cheat you, Judge! The table tilts:
"Is it I that move it? Write! I'll press your hand:
"Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge!"
Sludge still triumphant! "That a rap, indeed?
"That, the real writing? Very like a whale!
"Then, if, sir, you—a most distinguished man,
"And, were the Judge not here, I'd say, ... no matter!
"Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us in,—
"There's little fear that Sludge will!"

Won't he, ma'am?

But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
While you believed that what produced the raps
Was just a certain child who died, you know,
And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt?
Eh? That's a capital point, ma'am: Sludge begins
At your entreaty with your dearest dead,
The little voice set lisping once again,
The tiny hand made feel for yours once more,
The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
Which image, if a word had chanced recall,
The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang!
A right mood for investigation, this!
One's at one's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
Pompey and Cæsar: but one's own lost child . . .
I wonder, when you heard the first clod drop
From the spadeful at the grave-side, felt you free
To investigate who twitched your funeral scarf
Or brushed your flounces? Then, it came of course,
You should be stunned and stupid; then, (how else?)

Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck
work.

But now, such causes fail of such effects,
All's changed,—the little voice begins afresh,
Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try
And touch the truth. "Tests? Didn't the creature tell
"Its nurse's name, and say it lived six years,
"And rode a rocking-horse? Enough of tests!
"Sludge never could learn that!"

He could not, eh?

You compliment him. "Could not?" Speak for your-
self!

I'd like to know the man I ever saw
Once,—never mind where, how, why, when,—once saw,
Of whom I do not keep some matter in mind
He'd swear I "could not" know, sagacious soul!
What? Do you live in this world's blow of blacks,
Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
Of a smut's worth, no more, no less?—one fact
Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn
What someone was, somewhere, somewhen, somewhy?
You don't tell folk—"See what has stuck to me!
"Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,
"Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
"Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit
you!"—

Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week?
"No," you reply, "what use retailing it?
"Why should I?" But, you see, one day you *should*,
Because one day there's much use,—when this fact
Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees

Before the supernatural; proves that Sludge
Knows, as you say, a thing he "could not" know:
Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face,
The way the wind drives?

"Could not!" Look you now,
I'll tell you a story! There's a whiskered chap,
A foreigner, that teaches music here
And gets his bread, —knowing no better way:
He says, the fellow who informed of him
And made him fly his country and fall West,
Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and sang,
In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long;
Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look,
Nor lifted nose from lapstone; let the world
Roll round his three-legged stool, and news run in
The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.
Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay,
And took his praise from government, you see;
For something like two dollars every week,
He'd engage tell you some one little thing
Of some one man, which led to many more,
(Because one truth leads right to the world's end.)
And make you that man's master—when he dined
And on what dish, where walked to keep his health
And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus
His sense out, like an anteater's long tongue,
Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
And when 'twas crusted o'er with creatures—slick,
Their juice enriched his palate. "Could not Sludge!"

I'll go yet a step further, and maintain,

Once the imposture plunged its proper depth
I' the rotten of your natures, all of you,—
(If one's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)
It's impossible to cheat—that's, be found out!
Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,
All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,
And so has come to grief! You'll find, I think,
Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.
There now, you've told them! What's their prompt
reply?

"Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,
"I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times;
"That's in the 'medium' nature, thus they're made,
"Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.
"And so all cats are; still, a cat's the beast
"You coax the strange electric sparks from out,
"By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,
"Nor lion, nor lamb: 'tis the cat's nature, sir!
"Why not the dog's? Ask God, who made them beasts
"D'ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
"(Like me"—aside)—"like you yourself,"—(aloud)
"—He's stuff to make a 'medium?' Bless your soul,
"'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halves,
"Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire!
"We must take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
"Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
"How, I can't say, not being there to watch:
"He was tried; was tempted by your easiness,—
"He did not take in me!"

Thank you for Sludge!
I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,

When what you hear's my best word? 'Tis a challenge
"Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,
"So you cower duly at your keeper's nod!
"Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
"Only to me! Cheat others if you can,
"Me, if you dare!" And, my wise sir, I dared—
Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
And had the help o' your vaunted manliness
To bully the incredulous. You used me?
Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
And straight they'd own the error! Who was the fool
When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce
Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
To crotchet and quaver? I've made a spirit squeak
In sham voice for a minute, then outbroke
Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,
Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised.
"All right! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
"Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!"
Don't talk of gratitude to me! For what?
For being treated as a showman's ape,
Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
So long as the ape be in it and no man—
Because a nut pays every mood alike.
Curse your superior, superintending sort,
Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
To cure your chimney, bid a "medium" lie

To sweep you truth down! Curse your women too,
Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge
As only a "medium," only the kind of thing
They must humour, fondle . . oh, to misconceive
Were too preposterous! But I've paid them out!
They've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare:
'They had to blush a little and forgive!
'The fact is, children talk so; in next world
'All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
'Made light of: something like old prints, my dear!
'The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
'A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
'A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups
'Of wayside travellers, peasants at their work,
'And, full in front, quite unconcerned, why not?
'Three nymphs conversing with a cavalier,
'And never a rag among them: 'fine,' folk cry—
'And heavenly manners seem not much unlike!
'Let Sludge go on; we'll fancy it's in print!"
If such as came for wool, sir, went home shorn,
Where is the wrong I did them? 'Twas their choice;
They tried the adventure, ran the risk, tossed up
And lost, as some one's sure to do in games;
They fancied I was made to lose,—smoked glass
Useful to spy the sun through, spare their eyes:
And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
They thought to pierce, and, for their pains, grew blind,
Whose were the fault but theirs? While, as things go,
Their loss amounts to gain, the more's the shame!
They've had their peep into the spirit-world,

And all this world may know it! They've fed fat
Their self-conceit which else had starved: what chance
Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
And compassing distinction from the flock,
Friends of a feather? Well, they paid for it,
And not prodigiously; the price o' the play,
Not counting certain pleasant interludes,
Was scarce a vulgar play's worth. When you buy
The actor's talent, do you dare propose
For his soul beside? Whereas, my soul you buy!
Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be Macbeth,
Or you'll not hear his first word! Just go through
That slight formality, swear himself's the Thane,
And thenceforth he may strut and fret his hour,
Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one cares!
Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge as Sludge?
Enough of it all! I've wiped out scores with you—
Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked
Like tom-fool with your ochre and carmine,
Worn patchwork your respectable fingers sewed
To metamorphose somebody,—yes, I've earned
My wages, swallowed down my bread of shame,
And shake the crumbs off—where but in your face?

As for religion—why, I served it, sir!
I'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least, Swedenborg!
In fact, it's just the proper way to baulk
These troublesome fellows—liars, one and all,
Are not these sceptics? Well, to baffle them,
No use in being squeamish: lie yourself!
Erect your buttress just as wide o' the line,

Your side, as they've built up the wall on theirs;
Where both meet, midway in a point, is truth,
High overhead: so, take your room, pile bricks,
Lie! Oh, there's titillation in all shame!
What snow may lose in white, it gains in rose!
Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad exchange!
Glory be on her, for the good she wrought,
Breeding belief anew 'neath ribs of death,
Brow-beating now the unabashed before,
Ridding us of their whole life's gathered straws
By a live coal from the altar! Why, of old,
Great men spent years and years in writing books
To prove we've souls, and hardly proved it then:
Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me!
Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose
He let escape some spice of knavery,—well,
In wisely being blind to it! Don't you praise
Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
And saying . . what was it—that he could not see
The signal he was bothered? Ay, indeed!

I'll go beyond: there's a real love of a lie,
Liars find ready-made for lies they make,
As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-plum.
At best, 'tis never pure and full belief;
Those furthest in the quagmire,—don't suppose
They strayed there with no warning, got no chance
Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth,
Bent brow against! Be sure they had their doubts,
And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand! But no!
Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too apprised,

All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved,
And Sludge called "pet:" 'twas easier marching on
To the promised land; join those who, Thursday next
Meant to meet Shakespeare; better follow Sludge—
Prudent, oh sure!—on the alert how else?
But making for the mid-bog, all the same!
To hear your outcries, one would think I caught
Miss Stokes by the scuff o' the neck, and pitched her flat.
Foolish-face-foremost! Hear these simpletons,
That's all I beg, before my work's begun,
Before I've touched them with my finger-tip!
Thus they await me (do but listen, now!
It's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
The baby voice, though) "In so many tales
"Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,
"Yet, some: a single man's deceived, perhaps—
"Hardly, a thousand: to suppose one cheat
"Can gull all these, were more miraculous far
"I han aught we should confess a miracle"—
And so on. Then the Judge sums up—(it's rare)
Bids you respect the authorities that leap
To the judgment-seat at once,—why don't you note
The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
The spotless honour, indisputable sense
Of the first upstart with his story? What—
Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him?

Fools, these are: ay, and how of their opposites
Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
Believe for a moment?—Men emasculate,
Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs use,
With superstition safely,—cold of blood,

Who saw what made for them i' the mystery,
Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
—As proselytes? No, thank you, far too shrewd!
—But promisers of fair play, encouragers
O' the claimant; who in candour needs must hoist
Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge
To carry off, criticize, and cant about!
Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so?—at any rate,
It's "a new thing," philosophy fumbles at.
Then there's the other picker out of pearl
From dung heaps,—ay, your literary man,
Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
O' the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
And the cash that's God's sole solid in this world!
Look at him! Try to be too bold, too gross
For the master! Not you! He's the man for muck;
Shovel it forth, full-splash, he'll smooth your brown
Into artistic richness, never fear!
Find him the crude stuff; when you recognise
Your lie again, you'll doff your hat to it,
Dressed out for company! "For company,"
I say, since there's the relish of success:
Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
Who ushered in the stranger: you must sigh
"How melancholy, he, the only one
"Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
"Himself gave birth to!"—There's the triumph's smack!
That man would choose to see the whole world roll
I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip

Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
Of the outworn umber and bistre!

Yet I think
There's a more hateful form of foolery—
The social sage's, Solomon of saloons
And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
To try the edge of his faculty upon,
Prove how much common sense he'll hack and hew
I' the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish!
These were my patrons: these, and the like of them
Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
These I have injured! Gratitude to these?
The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
From the wag that wants the queer jokes for his club,
To the snuff-box-decorator, honest man,
Who just was at his wits' end where to find
So genial a Pasiphae! All and each
Pay, compliment, protect from the police,
And how she hates them for their pains, like me!
So much for my remorse at thanklessness
Toward a deserving public!

But, for God?
Ay, that's a question! Well, sir, since you press—
(How you do tease the whole thing out of me!
I don't mean you, you know, when I say "them:"
Hate you, indeed! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge!
Enough, enough—with sugar: thank you, sir!)
Now for it, then! Will you believe me, though?

You've heard what I confess; I don't unsay
A single word: I cheated when I could
Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
And all the rest; believe that: believe this,
By the same token, though it seem to set
The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
Stick up what I've thrown down; I can't help that:
It's truth! I somehow vomit truth to-day.
This trade of mine—I don't know, can't be sure
But there was something in it, tricks and all!
Really, I want to light up my own mind.
They were tricks,—true, but what I mean to add
Is also true. First,—don't it strike you, sir?
Go back to the beginning,—the first fact
We're taught is, there's a world beside this world,
With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry;
That much within that world once sojourned here,
That all upon this world will visit there,
And therefore that we, bodily here below,
Must have exactly such an interest
In learning what may be the ways o' the world
Above us, as the disembodied folk
Have (by all analogic likelihood)
In watching how things go in the old world
With us, their sons, successors, and what not.
Oh, yes, with added powers probably,
Fit for the novel state,—old loves grown pure,
Old interests understood aright,—they watch!
Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help,
Proportionate to advancement: they're ahead,
That's all—do what we do, but noblier done—

Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off delf,
(To use a figure.)

Concede that, and I ask
Next what may be the mode of intercourse
Between us men here, and those once-men there?
First comes the Bible's speech; then, history
With the supernatural element,—you know—
All that we sucked in with our mothers' milk,
Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
Till it's found bone of bone and flesh of flesh.
See now, we start with the miraculous,
And know it used to be, at all events:
What's the first step we take, and can't but take,
In arguing from the known to the obscure?
Why this: "What was before, may be to-day.
"Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul,—of course
"My brother's spirit may appear to me."
Go tell your teacher that! What's his reply?
What brings a shade of doubt for the first time
O'er his brow late so luminous with faith?
"Such things have been," says he, "and there's no
doubt
"Such things may be: but I advise mistrust
"Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more than all, your brain,
"Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
"Whenever they propose a ghost to you!"
The end is, there's a composition struck;
'Tis settled, we've some way of intercourse
Just as in Saul's time; only, different:
How, when and where, precisely,—find it out!
I want to know, then, what's so natural
As that a person born into this world

And seized on by such teaching, should begin
With firm expectancy and a frank look-out
For his own allotment, his especial share
I' the secret,—his particular ghost, in fine?
I mean, a person born to look that way,
Since natures differ: take the painter-sort,
One man lives fifty years in ignorance
Whether grass be green or red,—“No kind of eye
“For colour,” say you; while another picks
And puts away even pebbles, when a child,
Because of bluish spots and pinky veins—
“Give him forthwith a paint-box!” Just the same
Was I born . . . “medium,” you won't let me say,—
Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and everywhere,—
Will that do?

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-truth;
Only,—what in the rest you style their sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,
This, betimes, taught them the old world had one law
And ours another: “New world, new laws,” cried they:
“None but old laws, seen everywhere at work,”
Cried I, and by their help explained my life
The Jews' way, still a working way to me.
Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved the lights,
Or Santaclaus slid down on New Year's Eve
And stuffed with cakes the stocking at my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean the fingered slate
O' the sum that came to grief the day before.

This could not last long: soon enough I found

Who had worked wonders thus, and to what end:
But did I find all easy, like my mates?
Henceforth no supernatural any more?
Not a whit: what projects the billiard-balls?
"A cue," you answer: "Yes, a cue," said I;
"But what hand, off the cushion, moved the cue?
"What unseen agency, outside the world,
"Prompted its puppets to do this and that,
"Put cakes and shoes and slates into their mind,
"These mothers and aunts, nay even schoolmasters?"
Thus high I sprang, and there have settled since.
Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
About the greater godsend, what you call
The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your world
Which either is or seems to be? This snap
O' my fingers, sir! My care is for myself;
Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it: that's the use of things.
'Tis easy saying they serve vast purposes,
Advantage their grand selves: be it true or false,
Each thing may have two uses. What's a star?
A world, or a world's sun: doesn't it serve
As taper also, time-piece, weather-glass,
And almanac? Are stars not set for signs
When we should shear our sheep, sow corn, prune trees?
The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use
To all the acknowledged uses, and declare
If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-night,
It warns me, "Go, nor lose another day,

"And have your hair cut, Sludge!" You laugh: and why?
Were such a sign too hard for God to give?
No: but Sludge seems too little for such grace:
Thank you, sir! So you think, so does not Sludge!
When you and good men gape at Providence,
Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots prevented, crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle enough,
But private mercies—oh, you've told me, sir,
Of such interpositions! How yourself
Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out, you know,—
You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
And saved your precious self from what befell
The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of this?
Well, sir, I think then, since you needs must know,
What matter had you and Boston city to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings? Much
To you, no doubt: for me—undoubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
Because, however sad the truth may seem,
Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
You set apart that day in every year
For special thanksgiving, were a heathen else:
Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,
Suppose I said "I don't thank Providence
"For my part, owing it no gratitude?"
"Nay, but you owe as much"—you'd tutor me,
"You, every man alive, for blessings gained
"In every hour o' the day, could you but know!
"I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
"Could they but see!" Well, sir, why don't they see?

"Because they won't look,—or perhaps, they can't."
Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do
Look, microscopically as is right,
Into each hour with its infinitude
Of influences at work to profit Sludge?
For that's the case: I've sharpened up my sight
To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast
Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such facts
Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
And those same thanks which you exact from me,
Prove too prodigious payment: thanks for what,
If nothing guards and guides us little men?
No, no, sir! You must put away your pride,
Resolve to let Sludge into partnership!
I live by signs and omens: looked at the roof
Where the pigeons settle—"If the further bird,
"The white, takes wing first, I'll confess when thrashed;
"Not, if the blue does"—so I said to myself
Last week, lest you should take me by surprise:
Off flapped the white,—and I'm confessing, sir!
Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
With only me, i' the world: how can you tell?
"Because unlikely!" Was it likelier, now,
That this our one out of all worlds beside,
The what-d'you-call-'em millions, should be just
Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
And the rest o' the tale? Yet the tale's true, you know:
Such undeserving clod was graced so once;
Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge?
Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags?
All you can bring against my privilege
Is, that another way was taken with you,—

Which I don't question. It's pure grace, my luck.
I'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
And need no formal summoning. You've a help;
Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
Stamp with your foot or pull the bell: all's one,
He understands you want him, here he comes.
Just so, I come at the knocking: you, sir, wait
The tongue o' the bell, nor stir before you catch
Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,
Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
Your mother's face turned heavenward: short of these
There's no authentic intimation, eh?
Well, when you hear, you'll answer them, start up
And stride into the presence, top of toe,
And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge that sprung
At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-wall!
I think myself the more religious man.
Religion's all or nothing; it's no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
No quality o' the finelier-tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff
O' the very stuff, life of life, and self of self.
I tell you, men won't notice; when they do,
They'll understand. I notice nothing else,
I'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,
Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint,
Handle and help. It's all absurd, and yet
There's something in it all, I know: how much?
No answer! What does that prove? Man's still man,
Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work
When all's done; but, if somewhat's done, like this,
Or not done, is the case the same? Suppose
I blunder in my guess at the true sense

O' the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—
What if the tenth guess happen to be right?
If the tenth shovel-load of powered quartz
Yield me the nugget? I gather, crush, sift all,
Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.
To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh!)
When first I see a man, what do I first?
Why, count the letters which make up his name,
And as their number chances, even or odd,
Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course:
Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,
And haven't I found a patron, sir, in you?
"Shall I cheat this stranger?" I take apple-pips,
Stick one in either *canthus* of my eye,
And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)
I'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.
You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
You judge of character by other rules:
Don't your rules sometimes fail you? Pray, what rule
Have you judged Sludge by hitherto?

Oh, be sure,

You, everybody blunders, just as I,
In simpler things than these by far! Forsee:
I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre
Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,
And then declared, for outcome of his pains,
Next summer must be dampish: 'twas a drought.
His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,
Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,
And proved a sage indeed: how came his lore?
Because one brindled heifer, late in March,

Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow
He got into his head that drouth was meant!
I don't expect all men can do as much:
Such kissing goes by favour. You must take
A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist
I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
Open-mouthed, like my friend the anteater,
Letting all nature's loosely-guarded motes
Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think yourself
The one i' the world, the one for whom the world
Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth!
Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,
Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell, thrive,
Breed, multiply, and bring you food enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir!
Oh, what you mean is this! Such intimate way,
Close converse, frank exchange of offices,
Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great
With the infinitely small, betokened here
By a course of signs and omens, raps and sparks,—
How does it suit the dread traditional text
O' the "Great and Terrible Name?" Shall the Heaven
of Heavens
Stoop to such child's play?

Please sir, go with me

A moment, and I'll try to answer you.
The "*Magnum et terribile*" (is that right?)
Well, folk began with this in the early day;
And all the acts they recognised in proof
Were thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, whirlwinds, dealt
Indisputably on men whose death they caused.

There, and there only, folk saw Providence
At work,—and seeing it, 'twas right enough
All heads should tremble, hands wring hands amain,
And knees knock hard together at the breath
O' the Name's first letter; why, the Jews, I'm told,
Won't write it down, no, to this very hour,
Nor speak aloud: you know best if 't be so.
Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept
(Because somehow people once born must live)
Out of the sound, sight, swing and sway o' the Name,
Into a corner, the dark rest of the world,
And safe space where as yet no fear had reached;
'Twas there they looked about them, breathed again,
And felt indeed at home, as we might say.
The current o' common things, the daily life,
This had their due contempt; no Name pursued
Man from the mountain-top where fires abide,
To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in short:
Such was man's vulgar business, far too small
To be worth thunder: "small," folk kept on, "small,"
With much complacency in those great days!
A mote of sand, you know, a blade of grass—
What was so despicable as mere grass,
Except perhaps the life o' the worm or fly
Which fed there? These were "small" and men were
great.

Well, sir, the old way's altered somewhat since,
And the world wears another aspect now:
Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else
Puts a new lens in it: grass, worm, fly grow big:
We find great things are made of little things,
And little things go lessening till at last

Comes God behind them. Talk of mountains now!
 We talk of mould that heaps the mountain, mites
 That throng the mould, and God that makes the mites
 The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,
 The simplest of creations, just a sac
 That's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once, yet lives
 And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,
 If simplified still further one degree:
 The small becomes the dreadful and immense!
 Lightning, forsooth? No word more upon that!
 A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
 With a bit of wire and knob of brass, and there's
 Your dollar's-worth of lightning! But the cyst—
 The life of the least of the little things?

No, no!

Preachers and teachers try another tack,
 Come near the truth this time: they put aside
 Thunder and lightning: "That's mistake," they cry,
 "Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor sport,
 "But do appreciable good, like tides,
 "Changes o' the wind, and other natural facts—
 "'Good' meaning good to man, his body or soul.
 "Mediate, immediate, all things minister
 "To man;—that's settled: be our future text
 "'We are His children!'" So, they now harangue
 About the intention, the contrivance, all
 That keeps up an incessant play of love,—
 See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it!

Well, sir, I put this question: I'm a child?
 I lose no time, but take you at your word:

How shall I act a child's part properly?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to live
With such a thought as this a-worrying you?
"She has it in her power to throttle me,
"Or stab or poison: she may turn me out,
"Or lock me in,—nor stop at this to-day,
"But cut me off to-morrow from the estate
"I look for"—(long may you enjoy it, sir!)
"In brief, she may unchild the child I am."
You never had such crotchets? Nor have I!
Who, frank confessing childship from the first,
Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,
So, don't fear,—know what might be, well enough,
But know too, child-like, that it will not be,
At least in my case, mine, the son and heir
O' the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my style.
But do you fancy I stop short at this?
Wonder if suit and service, sons and heirs
Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find?
If, looking for signs proper to such an one,
I straight perceive them irresistible?
Concede that homage is a son's plain right,
And, never mind the nods and raps and winks,
'Tis the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty: why, of course!
I have presentiments; my dreams come true:
I fancy a friend stands whistling all in white
Blithe as a boblink, and he's dead I learn.
I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,
And sell him; he goes mad next week and snaps.
I guess that stranger will turn up to-day
I have not seen these three years; there's his knock.
I wager "sixty peaches on that tree!"—

That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
That your wife's brother's cousin's name was George—
And win on all points. Oh, you wince at this?
You'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,
Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to trump?
With Sludge it's too absurd? *Fine, draw the line
Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not mine!*

Bless us, I'm turning poet! It's time to end.
How you have drawn me out, sir! All I ask
Is—am I heir or not heir? If I'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same personage
(To judge by what we read i' the newspaper)
Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,
Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness: why want
Attendance, sir, when helps in his father's house
Abound, I'd like to know?

Enough of talk!

My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
Why, which of those who say they disbelieve,
Your clever people, but has dreamed his dream,
Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his fact
He can't explain, (he'll tell you smilingly)
Which he's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,
So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of it:
Bidding you still be on your guard, you know,
Because one fact don't make a system stand,
Nor prove this an occasional escape

Of spirit beneath the matter: that's the way!
Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by piece,
The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded these,
But never made a system stand, nor dug!
So wise men hold out in each hollowed palm
A handful of experience, sparkling fact
They can't explain; and since their rest of life
Is all explainable, what proof in this?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of gold,
And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each fool has found
O' the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,
Truth questionless though unexplainable,
And the miraculous proved the commonplace!
The other fools believed in mud, no doubt—
Failed to know gold they saw: was that so strange?
Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-fugues,
"Time" with the foil in carte, jump their own height,
Cut the mutton with the broadsword, skate a five,
Make the red hazard with the cue, clip nails
While swimming, in five minutes row a mile,
Pull themselves three feet up with the left arm,
Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances?
The Sludge with luck, who sees the spiritual facts,
His fellows strive and fail to see, may rank
With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share

The drawback! Think it over by yourself;
I have not heart, sir, and the fire's gone grey.

Defect somewhere compensates for success,
Everyone knows that. Oh, we're equals, sir!
The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win the race:
Do you suppose I 'scape the common lot?
Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,
I guess what's going on outside the veil,
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
In the islands where his kind are, so must fall
To capering by himself some shiny night,
As if your back-yard were a plot of spice—
Thus am I 'ware o' the spirit-world: while you,
Blind as a beetle that way,—for amends,
Why, you can double fist and floor me, sir!
Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid horse of yours,
Laugh while it lightens, play with the great dog,
Speak your mind though it vex some friend to hear,
Never brag, never bluster, never blush,—
In short, you've pluck, when I'm a coward—there!
I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
I'm paralyzed, my hand's no more a hand,
Nor my head, a head, in danger: you can smile
And change the pipe in your cheek. Your gift's not mine.
Would you swap for mine? No! but you'd add my gift
To yours: I dare say! I too sigh at times,
Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor flinch,
Kept cool when threatened, did not mind so much
Being dressed gaily, making strangers stare,
Eating nice things; when I'd amuse myself,
I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain,
I'm—now the President, now, Jenny Lind,
Now, Emerson, now, the Benicia Boy—

With all the civilized world a-wondering
And worshipping. I know it's folly and worse;
I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the soul:
But I can't cure myself,—despond, despair,
And then, hey, presto, there's a turn o' the wheel,
Under comes uppermost, fate makes full amends;
Sludge knows and sees and hears a hundred things
You all are blind to,—I've my taste of truth,
Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice no doubt,
But you've your vices also: I'm content.

What, sir? You won't shake hands? "Because I cheat!"
"You've found me out in cheating!" That's enough
To make an apostle swear! Why, when I cheat,
Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught in the act,
Are you, or rather, am I sure o' the fact?
(There's verse again, but I'm inspired somehow.)
Well then I'm not sure! I may be, perhaps,
Free as a babe from cheating: how it began,
My gift,—no matter; what 'tis got to be
In the end now, that's the question; answer that!
Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was holding mine,
Leading me whither, I had died of fright,
So, I was made believe I led myself.
If I should lay a six-inch plank from roof
To roof, you would not cross the street, one step,
Even at your mother's summons: but, being shrewd,
If I paste paper on each side the plank
And swear 'tis solid pavement, why, you'll cross
Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet below:
I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for stone.
Some impulse made me set a thing o' the move

Which, started once, ran really by itself;
Beer flows thus, suck the siphon; toss the kite,
It takes the wind and floats of its own force.
Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack
Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it!
Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,
She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie,
And ~~seen~~ truth follow, marvels none of mine;
All was ~~not~~ cheating, sir, I'm positive!
I don't know if I move your hand sometimes
When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,
If my knee lifts the table all that height,
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt,
Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz
Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
Why I speak so much more than I intend,
Describe so many things I never saw.
I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat: but in another sense
I'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie
Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it? This is why!
There's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice
In any desecration of one's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin!) who describes
The single gift o' the land's virginity,

Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
(I've but a hazy notion—help me, sir!)
For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,
One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore!
Well now, they understood a many things
Down by Nile city, or wherever it was!
I've always vowed, after the minute's lie,
And the end's gain,—truth should be mine henceforth.
'This goes to the root o' the matter, sir,—this plain
Plump fact: accept it and unlock with it
The wards of many a puzzle!

Or, finally,
Why should I set so fine a gloss on things?
What need I care? I cheat in self-defence,
And there's my answer to a world of cheats!
Cheat? To be sure, sir! What's the world worth else?
Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars?
Don't it want trimming, turning, furbishing up
And polishing over? Your so-styled great men.
Do they accept one truth as truth is found,
Or try their skill at tinkering? What's your world?
Here are you born, who are, I'll say at once,
Of the luckiest whether in head and heart,
Body and soul, or all that helps the same.
Well, now, look back: what faculty of yours
Came to its full, had ample justice done
By growing when rain fell, biding its time,
Solidifying growth when earth was dead,
Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due?
Never! You shot up and frost nipped you off,
Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout;

One faculty thwarted its fellow: at the end,
All you boast is, "I had proved a topping tree
In other climes"—yet this was the right clime
Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you've force
Wasted like well-streams: old,—oh, then indeed,
Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
Through which you'd play off wondrous waterwork;
Only, no water left to feed their play!
Young,—you've a hope, an aim, a love; it's tossed
And crossed and lost: you struggle on, some spark
Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
Through cold and pain; these in due time subside,
Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
Up with it on the tripod! It's extinct.
Spend your life's remnant asking, which was best,
Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine?
Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
Another life,—you've lost this world—you've gained
Its knowledge for the next.—What knowledge, sir,
Except that you know nothing? Nay, you doubt
Whether 'twere better have made you man or brute,
If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
There's your world!

Give it me! I slap it brisk
With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre: what's it now?
Changed like a rock-flat, rough with rusty weed,
At first wash-over o' the returning wave!

All the dry dead impracticable stuff
Starts into life and light again; this world
Pervaded by the influx from the next.
I cheat, and what's the happy consequence?
You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
As the price of worse than nothing! No mere film
Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
Against the outstretch of your very arms
And legs i' the sunshine moralists forbid!
What would you have? Just speak and, there, you see!
You're supplemented, made a whole at last,
Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
But so near, that the very difference piques,
Shows that e'en better than this best will be -
This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste since, one stage more,
And you arrive at the palace: all half real,
And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
That helps the interchange of natures, flesh
'Transfused by souls, and such souls! Oh, 'tis choice!
And if at whiles the bubble, blown too thin,
Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
The real world through the false,—what *do* you see?
Is the old so ruined? You find you're in a flock
O' the youthful, earnest, passionate—genius, beauty,
Rank and wealth also, if you care for these,
And all depose their natural rights, hail you,
(That's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-fellow.

Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow mine,
I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike!
Why, here's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia! Here is life indeed,
And the world well won now, yours for the first time!

And all this might be, may be, and with good help
Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge lies!
Why, he's at worst your poet who sings how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never was,
Did this or the other impossible great thing!
He's Lowell—it's a world, you smile and say,
Of his own invention—wondrous Longfellow,
Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does more than they,
And acts the books they write: the more his praise!

But why do I mount to poets? Take plain prose --
Dealers in common sense, set these at work,
What can they do without their helpful lies?
Each states the law and fact and face o' the thing
Just as he'd have them, finds what he thinks fit,
Is blind to what missuits him, just records
What makes his case out, quite ignores the rest.
It's a History of the World, the Lizard Age,
The Early Indians, the Old Country War,
Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you please,
All as the author wants it. Such a scribe
You pay and praise for putting life in stones,
Fire into fog, making the past your world.
There's plenty of "How did you contrive to grasp
"The thread which led you through this labyrinth?
"How build such solid fabric out of air?

"How on so slight foundation found this tale,
"Biography, narrative?" or, in other words,
"How many lies did it require to make
"The portly truth you here present us with?"
"Oh," quoth the penman, purring at your praise,
"'Tis fancy all; no particle of fact:
"I was poor and threadbare when I wrote that book
"Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at Thebes?
"We writers paint out of our heads, you see!
"—Ah, the more wonderful the gift in you,
"The more creativeness and godlike craft!"
But I, do I present you with my piece,
It's "What, Sludge? When my sainted mother spoke
"The verses Lady Jane Grey last composed
"About the rosy bower in the seventh heaven
"Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep house,—
"You made the raps? 'Twas your invention that?
"Cur, slave and devil!"—eight fingers and two thumbs
Stuck in my throat!

*

Well, if the marks seem gone,
'Tis because stiffish cock-tail, taken in time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.
'There, sir! I bear no malice: 'tisn't in me.
I know I acted wrongly: still, I've tried
What I could say in my excuse,—to show
The devil's not all devil . . . I don't pretend,
An angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I've lost you, lost myself,
Lost all, l-l-l- . . .

.

No—are you in earnest, sir?
O, yours, sir, is an angel's part! I know

What prejudice prompts, and what's the common course
Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit:
Only you rise superior to it all!
No, sir, it don't hurt much; it's speaking long
That makes me choke a little: the marks will go!
What? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,
And not a word to Greeley? One—one kiss
O' the hand that saves me! You'll not let me speak
I well know, and I've lost the right, too true!
But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so! That's, I think,
My bed-room candle. Good-night! Bl-l-less you, sir!

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard! Cowardly
scamp!

I only wish I dared burn down the house
And spoil your sniggering! Oh, what, you're the man?
You're satisfied at last? You've found out Sludge?
We'll see that presently: my turn, sir, next!
I too can tell my story: brute,—do you hear?—
You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
In just such a fit of passion: no, it was . . .
To get this house of hers, and many a note
Like these . . . I'll pocket them, however . . . five,
Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
Or else you poisoned her! Confound the cuss!
Where was my head? I ought to have prophesied
He'll die in a year and join her: that's the way.

I don't know where my head is: what had I done?

How did it all go? I said he poisoned her,
 And hoped he'd have grace given him to repent,
 Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
 And called me cheat: I thrashed' him,—who could
 help?

He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
 To cut and run and save him from disgrace:
 I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
 An end of him! Begin elsewhere anew!
 Boston's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
 V-notes are something, liberty still more.
 Beside, is he the only fool in the world?

APPARENT FAILURE.

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."

Paris Newspaper.

I.

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since
 I passed through Paris, stopped a day
 To see the baptism of your Prince;
 Saw, made my bow, and went my way:
 Walking the heat and headache off,
 I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
 Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
 Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
 So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

II.

Only the Doric little Morgue!

The dead-house where you show your drowned.
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,

Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case;

I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face

Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:
Let them! No Briton's to be baulked!

III.

First came the silent gazers; next,

A screen of glass, we're thankful for;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,

The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday.

So killed themselves: and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay

Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

IV.

Poor men, God made, and all for that!

The reverence struck me; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,

Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,

His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth

Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

V.

How did it happen, my poor boy?
You wanted to be Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart?
You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
You've gained what no Republic missed?
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

VI.

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!
What fancy was it, turned your brain?
Oh, women were the prize for you!
Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
The right thing to extinguish lust!

VII.

It's wiser being good than bad;
It's safer being meek than fierce:
It's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though æ wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

EPILOGUE.

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David.*

I.

ON the first of the Feast of Feasts,
The Dedication Day,
When the Levites joined the Priests
At the Altar in robed array,
Gave signal to sound and say,—

II.

When the thousands, rear and van,
Swarming with one accord,
Became as a single man,
(Look, gesture, thought and word)
In praising and thanking the Lord,—

III.

When the singers lift up their voice,
And the trumpets made endeavour,
Sounding, "In God rejoice!"
Saying, "In Him rejoice
"Whose mercy endureth for ever!"—

IV.

Then the Temple filled with a cloud,
 Even the House of the Lord;
 Porch bent and pillar bowed:
 For the presence of the Lord,
 In the glory of His cloud,
 Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER, as *Renan*.

Gone now! All gone across the dark so far,
 Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shutting still,
 Dwindling into the distance, dies that star
 Which came, stood, opened once! We gazed our fill
 With upturned faces on as real a Face
 That, stooping from grave music and mild fire,
 Took in our homage, made a visible place
 Through many a depth of glory, gyre on gyre,
 For the dim human tribute. Was this true?
 Could man indeed avail, mere praise of his,
 To help by rapture God's own rapture too,
 Thrill with a heart's red tinge that pure pale bliss?
 Why did it end? Who failed to beat the breast,
 And shriek, and throw the arms protesting wide,
 When a first shadow showed the star addressed
 Itself to motion, and on either side
 The rims contracted as the rays retired;
 The music, like a fountain's sickening pulse,
 Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
 Some vestige of a Face no pangs convulse,

No prayers retard; then even this was gone,
Lost in the night at last. We, lone and left
Silent through centuries, ever and anon
Venture to probe again the vault bereft
Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
Of multitudinous points, yet suns, men say—
And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
But where may hide what came and loved our clay?
How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
The star which chose to stoop and stay for us?
Unroll the records! Hailed ye such advance
Indeed, and did your hope vanish thus?
Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred?
We shall not look up, know ourselves are seen,
Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
Acting or suffering, have the disk's serene
Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
Nor doubt that, were mankind inert and numb,
Its core had never crimsoned all the same,
Nor, missing ours, its music fallen dumb?
Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch appals,
Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those the most
On whose repugnant brow the crown next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER.

1.

Witless alike of will and way divine,
How heaven's high with earth's low should intertwine!
Friends, I have seen through your eyes: now use mine!

II.

Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
Look at his head and heart, find how and why
He differs from his fellows utterly:

III.

Then, like me, watch when nature by degrees
Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
(They said of old) the instinctive water flees

IV.

Toward some elected point of central rock,
As though, for its sake only, roamed the flock
Of waves about the waste: awhile they mock

V.

With radiance caught for the occasion,—hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse,—

VI.

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
O' the current for a minute: then they wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the thing,

VII.

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak as bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

VIII.

When you see what I tell you,—nature dance
About each man of us, retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to enhance

IX.

His worth, and—once the life, his product, gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sustained,
And show thus real, a thing the North but feigned,—

X.

When you acknowledge that one world could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from you,—

XI.

Why, where's the need of Temple, when the walls
O' the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and trumpet-calls?

XII.

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows!

DRAMATIC ROMANCES.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
"That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army-leader Lannes
"Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
"We've got you Ratisbon!
"The Marshal's in the market-place,
"And you'll be there anon
"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,
"Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
 The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
 A year ago on this very day.

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
 The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
 Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—
 "But give me your sun from yonder skies!"
 They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
 To give it my loving friends to keep!
 Nought man could do, have I left undone:
 And you see my harvest, what I reap
 This very day, now a year is run.

IV.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
 Just a palsied few at the windows set;
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,
 At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

V.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
"Me?"—God might question; now instead,
'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
 Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
 "Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
 "Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 "Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but
 thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
 "Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 "Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

COUNT GISMOND.

AIX IN PROvence.

I.

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it; when he struck at length
My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

II.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed!
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

III.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
 To please themselves; 'twas all their deed;
 God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
 If showing mine so caused to bleed
 My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
 A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen
 By virtue of her brow and breast;
 Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
 As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
 Had either of them spoke, instead
 Of glancing sideways with still head!

V.

But no: they let me laugh, and sing
 My birthday song quite through, adjust
 The last rose in my garland, fling
 A last look on the mirror, trust
 My arms to each an arm of theirs,
 And so descend the castle-stairs—

VI.

And come out on the morning-troop
 Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
 And called me queen, and made me stoop
 Under the canopy—(a streak
 That pierced it, of the outside sun,
 Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

VII.

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII.

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 'twas time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 'twill last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX.

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

X.

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
"About her! Let her shun the chaste,
"Or lay herself before their feet!
"Shall she whose body I embraced
"A night long, queen it in the day?
"For honour's sake no crowns, I say!"

XI.

I? What I answered? As I live,
 I never fancied such a thing
 As answer possible to give.
 What says the body when they spring
 Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
 Strength on it? No more says the soul.

XII.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
 That I was saved. I never met
 His face before. but, at first view,
 I felt quite sure that God had set
 Himself to Satan; who would spend
 A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
 Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
 With one back-handed blow that wrote
 In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
 East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
 And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
 The heart of the joy, with my content
 In watching Gismond unalloyed
 By any doubt of the event:
 God took that on him—I was bid
 Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

XV.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said "Here die, but end thy breath
"In full confession, lest thou fleet
"From my first, to God's second death!
"Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied
"To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
—What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung
 Against the world; and scarce I felt
 His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
 A little shifted in its belt:
 For he began to say the while
 How South our home lay many a mile.

XX.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
 We two walked forth to never more
 Return. My cousins have pursued
 Their life, untroubled as before
 I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
 God lighten! May his soul find grace!

XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear
 Great brow; tho' when his brother's black
 Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?
 And have you brought my tercel back?
 I just was telling Adela
 How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
 "Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;
"I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day
"Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
"Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
"Might praise him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
"Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
"There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so
"New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:
"I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
"And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
"Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—
"Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
"The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
"Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:
"Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I.

OF the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate:
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III.

“Were the object less mean, would he stand
“At the swing of my hand!
“For obscurity helps him and blots
“The hole where he squats.”
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth:
Still he kept to his filth.

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself!
No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

V.

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
"Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
"The gravamen's in that!
"How the lion, who crouches to suit
"His back to my foot,
"Would admire that I stand in debate!
"But the small turns the great
"If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
"Toad or rat vex the king?
"Though I waste half my realm to unearth
"Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

VI.

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my under-ground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend?"
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, *I* was afraid!

MESMERISM.

I.

ALL I believed is true!
I am able yet
• All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new:
Dare I trust the same to you?

II.

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat's in the water-butt—

III.

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares—

IV.

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends!—

V.

If since eve drew in, I say,
I have sat and brought
(So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn grey—

VI.

Till I seemed to have and hold,
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me
From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold
To the foot in its muslin fold—

VII.

Have and hold, then and there,
 Her, from head to foot,
 Breathing and mute,
 Passive and yet aware,
 In the grasp of my steady stare—

VIII.

Hold and have, there and then,
 All her body and soul
 That completes my whole,
 All that women add to men,
 In the clutch of my steady ken—

IX.

Having and holding, till
 I imprint her fast
 On the void at last
 As the sun does whom he will
 By the calotypist's skill—

X.

Then,—if my heart's strength serve,
 And through all and each
 Of the veils I reach
 To her soul and never swerve,
 Knitting an iron nerve—

XI.

Command her soul to advance
 And inform the shape
 Which has made escape
 And before my countenance
 Answers me glance for glance—

XII.

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit—

XIII.

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent,
While the hands give vent
To my ardour and my aim
And break into very flame—

XIV.

Then I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave;

XV.

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI.

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine.

XVII.

Out of doors into the night!
 On to the maze
 Of the wild wood-ways,
 Not turning to left nor right
 From the pathway, blind with sight—

XVIII.

Making thro' rain and wind
 O'er the broken shrubs,
 'Twixt the stems and stubs,
 With a still, composed, strong mind,
 Nor a care for the world behind—

XIX.

Swifter and still more swift,
 As the crowding peace
 Doth to joy increase
 In the wide blind eyes uplift
 Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX.

While I—to the shape, I too
 Feel my soul dilate
 Nor a whit abate,
 And relax not a gesture due,
 As I see my belief come true.

XXI.

For, there! have I drawn or no
 Life to that lip?
 Do my fingers dip
 In a flame which again they throw
 On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII.

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfileted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed?

XXIII.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
See, on either side,
Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
Take me, for I am thine!

XXIV.

"Now—now"—the door is heard!
Hark, the stairs! and near—
Nearer—and here—
"Now!" and at call the third
She enters without a word.

XXV.

On doth she march and on
To the fancied shape;
It is, past escape,
Herself, now: the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI.

First I will pray. Do Thou
That ownest the soul,
Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now!

XXVII.

I admonish me while I may,
 Not to squander guilt,
 Since require Thou wilt
 At my hand its price one day!
 What the price is, who can say?

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

"HEIGHO," yawned one day King Francis,
 "Distance all value enhances!
 "When a man's busy, why, leisure
 "Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
 "Faith, and at leisure once is he?
 "Straightway he wants to be busy.
 "Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
 "Caught thinking war the true pastime.
 "Is there a reason in metre?
 "Give us your speech, master Peter!"
 I who, if mortal dare say so,
 Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
 "Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
 "Men are the merest Ixions"—
 Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
 ". . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions!"
 Such are the sorrowful chances
 If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
 Our company, Francis was leading;

Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most—
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,

The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
 As over the barrier which bounded
 His platform, and us who surrounded
 The barrier, they reached and they rested
 O' the space that might stand him in best stead:
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
 And if, in this minute of wonder,
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
 The lion at last was delivered?
 Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
 He was leagues in the desert already,
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
 To waylay the date-gathering negress:
 So guarded he entrance or egress.
 "How he stands!" quoth the King; "we may well swear
 ("No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
 "And so can afford the confession,)
 "We exercise wholesome discretion
 "In keeping aloof from his threshold;
 "Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
 "Their first would too pleasantly purloin
 "The visitor's brisket or surloin:
 "But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?
 "Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
 Fell close to the lion, and rested:

The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion,
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

“Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
“So should I!”—cried the King—“'twas mere vanity,
“Not love, set that task to humanity!”
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.
Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what “speeches like gold” were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,

Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
 She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
 Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
 And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
 If she wished not the rash deed's recalment?
 "For I"—so I spoke—"am a poet:
 "Human nature,—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
 "Of the deed proved alone by the word:
 "For my love—what De Lorge would not dare!
 "With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!
 "And the endless descriptions of death
 "He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
 "I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
 "Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
 "For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
 "Must offer my love in return.
 "When I looked on your lion, it brought
 "All the dangers at once to my thought,
 "Encountered by all sorts of men,
 "Before he was lodged in his den,—
 "From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
 "Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 "With no King and no Court to applaud,
 "By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
 "Yet to capture the creature made shift,
 "That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
 "—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
 "Of the pit, on no greater pretence
 "Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
 "Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
 "So, wiser I judged it to make

"One trial what 'death for my sake'
"Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
"Than to wait until time should define
"Such a phrase not so simply as I,
"Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
"The blow a glove gives is but weak:
"Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
"But when the heart suffers a blow,
"Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn:
If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first earn!"
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)

With the easy commission of stretching
 His legs in the service, and fetching
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
 While the King took the closet to chat in,—
 But of course this adventure came pat in.
 And never the King told the story,
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,
 But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer:
 "Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."
Venienti occurrile morbo!
 With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES.

I've a Friend, over the sea;
 I like him, but he loves me.
 It all grew out of the books I write;
 They find such favour in his sight
 That he slaughters you with savage looks
 Because you don't admire my books.
 He does himself though,—and if some vein
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
 Round should I just turn quietly,
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
 Till I found him, come from his foreign land
 To be my nurse in this poor place,
 And make my broth and wash my face
 And light my fire and, all the while,
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile

That I told him "Better have kept away
"Than come and kill me, night and day,
"With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
"The creaking of his clumsy boots."

I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me!
—Yes, rather should see him than not see,
If lifting a hand would seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady—there he wakes
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends!

I tell you, I stride up and down
 This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
 And feasted with love's perfect feast,
 To think I kill for her, at least,
 Body and soul and peace and fame,
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
 —So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
 Filled full, eaten out and in
 With the face of her, the eyes of her,
 The lips, the little chin, the stir
 Of shadow round her mouth; and she
 —I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
 That I should roast at a slow fire,
 If that would compass her desire
 And make her one whom they invite
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

'There may be heaven; there must be hell;
 Meantime, there is our earth here—well!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
 And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
 The fire-flies from the roof above,

Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew; when these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground:
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped

A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast:
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me
Rested the hopes of Italy;
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
'This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
"They fix the price, because I hate
"The Austrians over us: the State
"Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—
"If you betray me to their clutch,
"And be your death, for aught I know,
"If once they find you saved their foe.
"Now, you must bring me food and drink,
"And also paper, pen and ink,
"And carry safe what I shall write
"To Padua, which you'll reach at night

"Before the duomo shuts; go in,
"And wait till Tenebræ being;
"Walk to the third confessional,
"Between the pillar and the wall,
"And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
"Say it a second time, then cease;
"And if the voice inside returns,
"*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*
"*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
"My letter where you placed your lip;
"Then come back happy we have done
"Our mother service—I, the son,
"As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much"—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
"Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—"This faith was shown

"To Italy, our mother; she
 "Uses my hand and blesses thee."
 She followed down to the sea-shore;
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning—much less wished for—ought
 Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die!
 I never was in love; and since
 Charles proved false, what shall now convince
 My inmost heart I have a friend?
 However, if I pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself—say, three—
 I know at least what one should be.
 I would grasp Metternich until
 I felt his red wet throat distil
 In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
 —Nor much for that am I perplexed—
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
 Should die slow of a broken heart
 Under his new employers. Last
 —Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
 Do I grow old and out of strength.
 If I resolved to seek at length
 My father's house again, how scared
 'They all would look, and unprepared!
 My brothers live in Austria's pay
 —Disowned me long ago, men say;
 And all my early mates who used
 To praise me so—perhaps induced
 More than one early step of mine—
 Are turning wise: while some opine

"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

PIANO DI SORRENTO.

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
 Sit here by my side,
 On my knees put up both little feet!
 I was sure, if I tried,
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
 Now, open your eyes,
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish
 In black from the skies,
 With telling my memories over
 As you tell your beads;
 All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
 —The flowers or the weeds.
 Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn
 Had net-worked with brown
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
 Marked like a quail's crown,
 Those creatures you make such account of,
 Whose heads,—speckled with white
 Over brown like a great spider's back,
 As I told you last night,—
 Your mother bites off for her supper.
 Red-ripe as could be,
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
 In halves on the tree:
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,
 Or in the thick dust
 On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
 Wherever could thrust

Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover:
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,

While round him like imps
 Cling screaming the children as naked
 And brown as his shrimps;
 Himself too as bare to the middle
 —You see round his neck
 The string and its brass coin suspended,
 That saves him from wreck.
 But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
 So back, to a man,
 Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
 Grape-harvest began.
 In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
 Like blood the juice spins,
 While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
 Till breathless he grins
 Dead-beaten in effort on effort
 To keep the grapes under,
 Since still when he seems all but master,
 In pours the fresh plunder
 From girls who keep coming and going
 With basket on shoulder,
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving;
 Your girls that are older,—
 For under the hedges of aloe,
 And where, on its bed
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
 Lies pulpy and red,
 All the young ones are kneeling and filling
 Their laps with the snails
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
 Your best of regales,
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
 When, supping in state,

We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,
Three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That colour of popes.
Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence:
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter;
Next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
Scirocco is loose!
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black!
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest!
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,

And listen or sleep.
 O how will your country show next week,
 When all the vine-boughs
 Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
 The mules and the cows?
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains;
 Your brother, my guide,
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
 That offered, each side,
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
 Or strip from the sorbs
 A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
 Those hairy gold orbs!
 But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
 Just stopping to neigh
 When he recognized down in the valley
 His mates on their way
 With the faggots and barrels of water;
 And soon we emerged
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;
 And still as we urged
 Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
 As up still we trudged
 Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
 And place was e'en grudged
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which climbed there to die
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed
 That clung to the path,
 And dark rosemary ever a-dying
 That, 'spite the wind's wrath,

So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
And lentisks as staunch
To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And . . . what shows a branch
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves;
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady:
So, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!
No rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!
Still moving with you;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view
To observe the intruder; you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them:
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over
And love (they pretend)
—Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,
The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut:

All is silent and grave:
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
 How fair! but a slave.
 So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered
 As greenly as ever
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli;
 No ages can sever
 The Three, nor enable their sister
 To join them,—halfway
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
 No farther to-day,
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,
 Watches breast-high and steady
 From under the rock, her bold sister
 Swum halfway already.
 Fortù, shall we sail there together
 And see from the sides
 Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
 Where the siren abides?
 Shall we sail round and round them, close over
 The rocks, tho' unseen,
 That ruffle the grey glassy water
 To glorious green?
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
 Reach land and explore,
 On the largest, the strange square black turret
 With never a door,
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;
 Then, stand there and hear
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
 What life is, so clear?
 —The secret they sang to Ulysses
 When, ages ago,

He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, seel The sun breaks o'er Calvano;
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there;
One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
—An abbot's own cheek.
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening;
To-morrow's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
With red and blue papers;

All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
A-blaze with long tapers;
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
Religiously popped;
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
And more poppers bang.
At all events, come—to the garden,
As far as the wall;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

—“Such trifles!” you say?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise

—If 'twere proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies!

IN A GONDOLA,

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
"This woman's heart and soul and brain
Are mine as much as this gold chain
She bids me wear; which" (say again)
"I choose to make by cherishing
A precious thing, or choose to fling
Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more!
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,

Which if the Three should hear you call,
 And me reply to, would proclaim
 At once our secret to them all.
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
 Do, break down the partition-wall
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
 What's left but—all of me to take?
 I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
 Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage
 In practising with gems can loose
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce
 And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
 Leave them my ashes when thy use
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
 What's that poor Agnese doing
 Where they make the shutters fast?
 Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
 To his couch the purchased bride:
 Past we glide!

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
 Like a beacon to the blast?
 Guests by hundreds, not one caring
 If the dear host's neck were wried:
 Past we glide!

She sings.

I.

The moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II.

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I.

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

II.

Say again, what we are?
 The sprite of a star,
 I lure thee above where the destinies bar
 My plumes their full play
 Till a ruddier ray
 Than my pale one announce there is withering away
 Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now.
 As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
 The land's lap or the water's breast?
 To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
 Or swim in lucid shallows just
 Eluding water-lily leaves,
 An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
 To lock you, whom release he must;
 Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?
 From this shoulder let there spring
 A wing; from this, another wing;
 Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
 Snow-white must they spring, to blend
 With your flesh, but I intend
 They shall deepen to the end,
 Broader, into burning gold,
 Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
 Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
 To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet .

As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

I.

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water—feel!

Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass

To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,

When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look: your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell!
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!

Oh, could you take them by surprise,
 You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
 Doing the quaintest courtesies
 To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
 And, deeper into her rock den,
 Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
 You'd find retreated from the ken
 Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
 As if the Tizian thinks of her,
 And is not, rather, gravely bent
 On seeing for himself what toys
 Are these, his progeny invent,
 What litter now the board employs
 Whereon he signed a document
 That got him murdered! Each enjoys
 Its night so well, you cannot break
 The sport up, so, indeed must make
 More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
 Is used to tie the jasmine back
 That overflows my room with sweets,
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
 My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,
 The Three are watching: keep away!

II.

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe
 A mesh of water-weeds about
 Its prow, as if he unaware

Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, "All thanks, Siora!"—

Heart to heart
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!

He is surprised, and stabbed.

It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can die!

WARING.

I.

I.

WHAT'S become of Waring
 Since he gave us all the slip,
 Chose land-travel or seafaring,
 Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
 Rather than pace up and down
 Any longer London town?

II.

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
 Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
 On the night he thus took ship
 Or started landward?—little caring
 For us, it seems, who supped together
 (Friends of his too, I remember)
 And walked home thro' the merry weather,
 The snowiest in all December.
 I left his arm that night myself
 For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
 Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
 How, forsooth, was I to know it
 If Waring meant to glide away
 Like a ghost at break of day?
 Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the devil:
 How he must have cursed our revel!
 Ay and many other meetings,

Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
"Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,
"Certain first steps were achieved
"Already which"—(is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
"In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic

Penman's latest piece of graphic.
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm
 With his dragging weight of arm.
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,
 Through one's after-supper musings,
 Some lost lady of old years
 With her beauteous vain endeavour
 And goodness unrepaid as ever;
 The face, accustomed to refusings,
 We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
 Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
 Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
 Telling aught but honest truth to?
 What a sin, had we centupled
 Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
 No! she heard in its completeness
 Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
 And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
 Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
 From damning us thro' such a sally;
 And so she glides, as down a valley,
 Taking up with her contempt,
 Past our reach; and in, the flowers
 Shut her unregarded hours.

V.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
 This Waring, but one half-day more!
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,
 So hungry for acknowledgment
 Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
 I'd say, "to only have conceived,

"Planned your great works, apart from progress,
"Surpasses little works achieved!"
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humours licensé, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff

To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
 And leave the grand white neck no gash
 Waring in Moscow, to those rough
 Cold northern natures born perhaps,
 Like the lambwhite maiden dear
 From the circle of mute kings
 Unable to repress the tear,
 Each as his sceptre down he flings,
 To Dian's fane at Taurica,
 Where now a captive priestess, she alway
 Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach
 As pours some pigeons, from the myrrhy lands
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
 Amid their barbarous twitter!
 In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
 Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
 That we and Waring meet again
 Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
 Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
 All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid
 It's stiff gold blazing pall
 From some black coffin-lid.
 Or, best of all,
 I love to think
 The leaving us was just a feint;
 Back here to London did he slink,
 And now works on without a wink
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink
 Of something great in fresco-paint:
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
 Up and down and o'er and o'er

He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
“Give me my so-long promised son,
“Let Waring end what I begun!”
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath:
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take

Into his hand, he told you, so—
 And out of it his world to make,
 To contract and to expand
 As he shut or oped his hand.
 Oh Waring, what's to really be?
 A clear stage and a crowd to see!
 Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
 Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
 His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck
 Of calling Rowley into life!
 Some one shall somehow run a muck
 With this old world for want of strife
 Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
 To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
 Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow,
 As if they played at being names
 Still more distinguished, like the games
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
 With a visage of the sternest!
 Bring the real times back, confessed
 Still better than our very best!

II.

I.

"WHEN I last saw Waring . . ."
 (How all turned to him who spoke!
 You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
 In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II.

"We were sailing by Triest
"Where a day or two we harboured:
"A sunset was in the West,
"When, looking over the vessel's side,
"One of our company espied
"A sudden speck to larboard.
"And as a sea-duck flies and swims
"At once, so came the light craft up,
"With its sole lateen sail that trims
"And turns (the water round its rims
"Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
"And by us like a fish it curled,
"And drew itself up close beside,
"Its great sail on the instant furled,
"And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
"(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
"Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
"Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
"A pilot for you to Triest?
"Without one, look you ne'er so big,
"They'll never let you up the bay!
"We natives should know best.'
"I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
"Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
"Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III.

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
"And one, half-hidden by his side
"Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
"With great grass hat and kerchief black,
"Who looked up with his kingly throat,

"Said somewhat, while the other shook
 "His hair back from his eyes to look
 "Their longest at us; then the boat,
 "I know not how, turned sharply round,
 "Laying her whole side on the sea
 "As a leaping fish does; from the lee
 "Into the weather, cut somehow
 "Her sparkling path beneath our bow,
 "And so went off, as with a bound,
 "Into the rosy and golden half
 "O' the sky, to overtake the sun
 "And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
 "Its singing cave; yet I caught one
 "Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
 "And neither time nor toil could mar
 "Those features: so I saw the last
 "Of Waring!"—You? Oh, never star
 Was lost here but it rose afar!
 Look East, where whole new thousands are!
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS.

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

I.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
 • Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
 The better the uncouth:
 Do roses stick like burrs?

II.

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
The abbot replied, "We're poor!"

III.

"Poor, who had plenty once,
"When gifts fell thick as rain:
"But they give us nought, for the nonce,
"And how should we give again?"

IV.

Then the beggar, "See your sins! .
"Of old, unless I err,
"Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
"Date and Dabitur.

V.

"While Date was in good case
"Dabitur flourished too:
"For Dabitur's lenten face
"No wonder if Date rue.

VI.

"Would ye retrieve the one?
"Try and make plump the other!
"When Date's penance is done,
"Dabitur helps his brother.

VII.

"Only, beware relapse!"
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I.

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II.

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.



III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim!

IV.

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V.

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

VI.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII.

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
"Though I love her—that, he comprehends—
"One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
"And be loyal to one's friends!"

IX.

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try and off it came;
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

X.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see;
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.

XII.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own:
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!

XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
That the woman was light is very true:
But suppose she says,—Never mind that youth!
What wrong have I done to you?

XIV.

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here's a subject made to your hand!

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I.

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two

With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

III.

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—

And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?

Had I said that, had I done this,
 So might I gain, so might I miss.
 Might she have loved me? just as well
 She might have hated, who can tell!
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?
 And here we are riding, she and I.

V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,
 As the world rushed by on either side.
 I thought,—All labour, yet no less
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty done, the undone vast,
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
 What heart alike conceived and dared?
 What act proved all its thought had been?
 What will but felt the fleshy screen?
 We ride and I see her bosom heave.
 There's many a crown for who can reach.
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
 A soldier's doing! what atones?
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
 My riding is better, by their leave.

VII.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me I ride.

VIII.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.

This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I descry such? Try and test!
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.
 Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
 Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
 What if heaven be that, fair and strong
 At life's best, with our eyes upturned
 Whither life's flower is first discerned,
 We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
 What if we still ride on, we two,
 With life for ever old yet new,
 Changed not in kind but in degree,
 The instant made eternity,—
 And heaven just prove that I and she
 Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W.M. THE YOUNGER.)

I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
 By famous Hanover city;
 The river Weser, deep and wide,
 Washes its wall on the southern side;
 A pleasanter spot you never spied;

But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II.

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;
"And as for our Corporation—shocking
"To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
"For dolts that can't or won't determine
"What's best to rid us of our vermin!
"You hope, because you're old and obese,
"To find in the furry civic robe ease?
"Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
"To find the remedy we're lacking,
"Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sat in council,
 At length the Mayor broke silence:
 "For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
 "I wish I were a mile hence!"
 "It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
 "I'm sure my poor head aches again,
 "I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
 "Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
 Just as he said this, what should hap
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
 "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"
 (With the Corporation as he sat,
 Looking little though wondrous fat;
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,
 Save when at noon, his paunch grew mutinous
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
 "Anything like the sound of a rat
 "Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V.

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
 And in did come the strangest figure!
 His queer long coat from heel to head
 Was half of yellow and half of red,
 And he himself was tall and thin,
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
 But lips where smiles went out and in;
 There was no guessing his kith and kin:

And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
"Had walked this way from his painted tomb-stone!"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,
"By means of a secret charm, to draw
"All creatures living beneath the sun,
"That creep or swim or fly or run,
"After me so as you never saw!
"And I chiefly use my charm
"On creatures that do people harm,
"The mole and toad and newt and viper;
"And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
"In Tartary I freed the Cham,
"Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats
"I eased in Asia the Nizam
"Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
"And as for what your brain bewilders,
"If I can rid your town of rats
"Will you give me a thousand guilders?"

"One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished!
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam•across and lived to carry

(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
"I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
"And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
"Into a cider-press's gripe:
"And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
"And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
"And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
"And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
"And it seemed as if a voice
"(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
"Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
"The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
"So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
"Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!
"And just as a bulky sugar-punchŕon,
"All ready staved, like a great sun shone
"Glorious scarce an inch before me,
"Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'
"—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
"Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
"Consult with carpenters and builders,
"And leave in our town not even a trace
"Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX.

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue,
 So did the Corporation too.
 For council dinners made rare havoc
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
 And half the money would replenish
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
 "Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
 "Our business was done at the river's brink;
 "We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
 "And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
 "So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
 "From the duty of giving you something for drink,
 "And a matter of money to put in your poke;
 "But as for the guilders, what we spoke
 "Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
 "Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
 "A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X.

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
 "No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
 "I've promised to visit by dinnertime
 "Bagdat, and accept the prime
 "Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
 "For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
 "Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
 "With him I proved no bargain-driver,
 "With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
 "And folks who put me in a passion
 "May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook
"Being worse treated than a Cook?
"Insulted by a lazy ribald
"With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
"You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
"Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII.

Once more he stept into the street,
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by, "
—Could only follow with the eye ."

That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
 As the Piper turned from the High Street
 To where the Weser rolled its waters
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
 However he turned from South to West,
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
 And after him the children pressed
 Great was the joy in every breast.
 "He never can cross that mighty top!
 "He's forced to let the piping drop,
 "And we shall see our children stop!"
 When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
 A wondrous portal opened wide,
 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
 And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
 And when all were in to the very last,
 The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
 Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
 And could not dance the whole of the way;
 And in after years, if you would blame
 His sadness, he was used to say,—
 "It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
 "I can't forget that I'm bereft
 "Of all the pleasant sights they see,
 "Which the Piper also promised me.
 "For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
 "Joining the town and just at hand,
 "Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,
 "And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 "And everything was strange and new;
 "The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,

"And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
"And honey-bees had lost their stings,
"And horses were born with eagles' wings:
"And just as I became assured
"My lame foot would be speedily cured,
"The music stopped and I stood still,
"And found myself outside the hill,
"Left alone against my will,
"To go now limping as before,
"And never hear of that country more!"

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel ir!
The mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
"On the Twenty-second of July,
"Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix

The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern

To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

xv.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I.

You'RE my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too.
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II.

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you've passed the corn-field country
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—

Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
 Copper-ore and iron-ore,
 And forge and furnace mould and melt,
 And so on, more and ever more,
 Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
 Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
 —And the whole is our Duke's country.

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
 (And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
 In the castle where the other Duke was—
 (When I was happy and young, not old!)
 I in the kennel, he in the bower:
 We are of like age to an hour.
 My father was huntsman in that day;
 Who has not heard my father say
 That, when a boar was brought to bay,
 Three times, four times out of five,
 With his huntspear he'd contrive
 To get the killing-place transfixed,
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
 And that's why the old Duke would rather
 He lost a salt-pit than my father,
 And loved to have him ever in call;
 That's why my father stood in the hall
 When the old Duke brought his infant out
 To show the people, and while they passed
 The wondrous bantling round about,
 Was first to start at the outside blast
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
 Just a month after the babe was born.
 'And,' quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since

"The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
"Needs the Duke's self at his side:"
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
—They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)
Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin!
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?
—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them
torn-out:

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive:
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;

And Max, who rode on her other hand,
 Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
 What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
 If that was an eagle she saw hover,
 And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover,
 When suddenly appeared the Duke:
 And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
 On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
 And as if his backbone were not jointed,
 The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
 And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
 And, mind you, his mother all the while
 Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward;
 And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
 Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
 And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
 'The lady's face stopped its play,
 As if her first hair had grown grey;
 For such things must begin some one day.

VII.

In a day or two she was well again;
 As who should say, "You labour in vain!
 "This is all a jest against God, who meant
 "I should ever be, as I am, content
 "And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be."
 So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
 Could not rest, could not tire—

To a stone she might have given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him!
So found the Duke, and his mother like him:
The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

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IX.

A little lady grew silent and thin,
 And ever paling,
 The way is with a hid chagrin;
 And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
 And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,
 'But I shall find in my power to right me!"
 Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,
 Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
 And another and another, and faster and faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
 And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
 He should do the Middle Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
 Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
 What meant old poets by their strictures?
 And when old poets had said their say of it,
 How taught old painters in their pictures?
 We must revert to the proper channels,
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
 And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:
 Here was food for our various ambitions,
 As on each case, exactly stated—
 To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,

Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting you
We of the household took thought and debat.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jer.
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't!

XI.

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
"Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
"And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
"In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
"Let her preside at the disemboweling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion

As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
 And thrust her broad wings like a banner
 Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;
 And if day by day and week by week
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
 Would it cause you any great surprise
 If, when you decided to give her an airing,
 You found she needed a little preparing?
 —I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth
 aught,
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
 And much wrong now that used to be right,
 So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
 Was conduct ever more affronting?
 With all the ceremony settled—
 With the towel ready, and the sewer
 Polishing up his oldest ewer,
 And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
 Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled,—
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
 And when she persisted nevertheless,—
 Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
 That there ran half round our lady's chamber

A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and
station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friends, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers
ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
 And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
 And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
 With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
 For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
 You might cut as an axe chops a log—
 Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
 And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
 Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
 And a sinking at the lower abdomen
 Begins the day with indifferent omen.
 And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
 This way and that from the valley under;
 And, looking through the court-yard arch,
 Down in the valley, what should meet him
 But a troop of Gipsies on their march?
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII.

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
 After reaching all lands beside;
 North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
 And still, as they travel far and wide,
 Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
 That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
 But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned;
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
 The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
 For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,

The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry; '
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,

I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
 The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
 And, sure as the autumn season came round,
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
 And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
 And presently she was seen to sidle
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up
 As under its nose the old witch peered up
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
 Of no use now but to gather brine,
 And began a kind of level whine
 Such as they used to sing to their viols
 When their ditties they go grinding
 Up and down with nobody minding:
 And then, as of ~~old~~, at the end of the humming
 Her usual presents were forthcoming
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
 (Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
 Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
 A word in reply; and in vain she felt
 With twitching fingers at her belt
 For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
 Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
 Or possibly with an after-intention,
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty
 To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
 No sooner had she named his lady,
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,

And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery—
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,

Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

• XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken:

They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

xv. ' .

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the **eyes where life holds garrison**,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent

On the lady's head and face intent:
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
 The lady sat between her knees,
 And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
 And on those hands her chin was set,
 And her upturned face met the face of the crone
 Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
 As if she could double and quadruple
 At pleasure the play of either pupil
 —Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
 They moved to measure, or bell clappers.
 I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
 Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
 Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?
 But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
 At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:
 For it was life her eyes were drinking
 From the crone's wide pair above unwinking.
 —Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving
 Told you no single drop they were leaving,
 —Life, that filling her, passed redundant
 Into her very hair, back swerving
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
 As her head thrown back showed the white throat
 curving,
 And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
 Moving to the mystic measure,
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.
 I stopped short, more and more confounded,
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
 As she listened and she listened:

When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furl'd
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said:—

“And so at last we find my tribe.
“And so I set thee in the midst,
“And to one and all of them describe
“What thou saidst and what thou didst,
“Our long and terrible journey through,
“And all thou art ready to say and do
“In the trials that remain:
“I trace them the vein and the other vein
“That meet on thy brow and part again,
“Making our rapid mystic mark;
“And I bid my people prove and probe
“Each eye’s profound and glorious globe
“Till they detect the kindred spark
“In those depths so dear and dark,
“Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
“Circling over the midnight sea.
“And on that round young cheek of thine
“I make them recognise the tinge,
“As when of the costly scarlet wine
“They drip so much as will impinge

"And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
 "One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
 "Over a silver plate whose sheen
 "Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
 "For so I prove thee, to one and all,
 "Fit, when my people ope their breast,
 "To see the sign, and hear the call,
 "And take the vow, and stand the test
 "Which adds one more child to the rest—
 "When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
 "And the world is left outside.
 "For there is probation to decree,
 "And many and long must the trials be
 "Thou shalt victoriously endure,
 "If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
 "Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
 "Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
 "Let once the vindicating ray
 "Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
 "And steel and fire have done their part
 "And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
 "So, trial after trial past,
 "Wilt thou fall at the very last
 "Breathless, half in trance
 "With the thrill of the great deliverance,
 "Into our arms for evermore;
 "And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
 "About thee, what we knew before,
 "How love is the only good in the world.
 "Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
 "Or brain devise, or hand approve!
 "Stand up, look below,
 "It is our life at thy feet we throw

“To step with into light and joy;
“Not a power of life but we employ
“To satisfy thy nature’s want;
“Art thou the tree that props the plant,
“Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
“Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
“If any two creatures grew into one,
“They would do more than the world has done;
“Though each apart were never so weak,
“Ye vainly through the world should seek
“For the knowledge and the might
“Which in such union grew their right:
“So, to approach at least that end,
“And blend,—as much as may be, blend
“Thee with us or us with thee,—
“As climbing plant or propping-tree,
“Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
“Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
“Fix his heart’s fruit for thy garland crown,
“Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
“Die on thy boughs and disappear
“While not a leaf of thine is sere?
“Or is the other fate in store,
“And art thou fitted to adore,
“To give thy wondrous self away,
“And take a stronger nature’s sway?
“I foresee and could foretell
“Thy future portion, sure and well:
“But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
“Let them say what thou shalt do!
“Only be sure thy daily life,
“In its peace or in its strife,
“Never shall be unobserved;

"We pursue thy whole career,
 "And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
 "Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
 "We are beside thee in all thy ways,
 "With our blame, with our praise,
 "Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 "Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!
 "Whether it be thy lot to go,
 "For the good of us all, where the haters meet
 "In the crowded city's horrible street;
 "Or thou step alone through the morass
 "Where never sound yet was
 "Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
 "For the air is still, and the water still,
 "When the blue breast of the dipping coot
 "Dives under, and all is mute.
 "So, at the last shall come old age,
 "Decrepit as bends that stage;
 "How else wouldst thou retire apart
 "With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
 "And gather all to the very least
 "Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
 "Let fall through eagerness to find
 "The crowning dainties yet behind?
 "Ponder on the entire past
 "Laid together thus at last,
 "When the twilight helps to fuse
 "The first fresh with the faded hues,
 "And the outline of the whole,
 "As round eve's shades their framework roll,
 "Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
 "And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 "Of yet another morning breaks,

"And like the hand which ends a dream,
"Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
"Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
"Then—"

Ay, then indeed something would happen!
But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,

I felt at once that all was best,
 And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
 But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful
 Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;
 I saw the glory of her eye,
 And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
 And I was hers to live or to die.
 As for finding what she wanted,
 You know God Almighty granted
 Such little signs should serve wild creatures
 To tell one another all their desires,
 So that each knows what his friend requires,
 And does its bidding without teachers.
 I preceded her; the crone
 Followed silent and alone;
 I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
 In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
 Back to their pits, her stature shrunk;
 In short, the soul in its body sunk
 Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
 We descended, I preceding;
 Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
 All the world was at the chase,
 The court-yard like a desert-place,
 The stable emptied of its small fry;
 I saddled myself the very palfrey
 I remember patting while it carried her,
 The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
 And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
 The lady had not forgotten it either,
 And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
 Would have been only too glad for her service

To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk devise,⁶
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it.
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.

And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
 These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her.

XVI.

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?
 I did think to describe you the panic in
 The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
 When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness
 —But it seems such child's play,
 What they said and did with the lady away!
 And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
 As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
 She that kept it in constant good humour,
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do
 more.

But the world thought otherwise and went on,
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
 Thirty years are fled since that morning,
 And with them all my head's adorning.
 Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
 As you expect, of suppressed spite,
 The natural end of every adder
 Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
 But she and her son agreed, I take it,
 That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
 For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,

Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
 I have seen my little lady once more,
 Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
 For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
 I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:
 And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that went
 trickle,
 Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
 Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
 And genially floats me about the giblets.
 I'll tell you what I intend to do:
 I must see this fellow his sad life through—
 He is our Duke, after all,
 And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
 My father was born here, and I inherit
 His fame, a chain he bound his son with;
 Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
 But there's no mine to blow up and get done with:
 So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
 For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
 Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
 Some day or other, his head in a morion
 And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,
 Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
 And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
 And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
 Then I shall scrape together my earnings;
 For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
 And our children all went the way of the roses:
 It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
 One needs but little tackle to travel in;
 So, ^{just} one stout cloak shall I indue:
 And for a staff, what beats the javelin

With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
“You never knew then, how it all ended,
“What fortune good or bad attended
“The little lady your Queen befriended?”
—And when that's told me, what's remaining?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.

—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
'To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE.

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
Each in its ether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow:
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row!
'That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;
No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit.

Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:

Wait ye the warning?

Our low life was the level's and the night's;

He's for the morning.

Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,

'Ware the beholders!

This is our master, famous calm and dead,

Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft

Safe from the weather!

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,

Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and throat,

Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note

Winter would follow?

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!

Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!

"My dance is finished?"

No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,

Make for the city!)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride

Over men's pity;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world

Bent on escaping:

"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?

"Show me their shaping,

"Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—

"Give!"—So, he gown'd him,

Straight got by heart that book to its last page:

Learned, we found him.

Yēa, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain:
 "Time to taste life," another would have said,
 "Up with the curtain!"
 This man said rather, "Actual life comes next!
 "Patience a moment!
 "Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 "Still there's the comment.
 "Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
 "Painful or easy!
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
 "Ay, nor feel queasy."
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give!
 Sooner, he spurned it.
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
 Gaping before us.)
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus!)
 That before living he'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning:
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:
 "Live now or never!"
 He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
 "Man has Forever."

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:

Calculus racked him:

Lead^{en} before, his eyes grew dross of lead:

Tussis attacked him.

"Now, master, take a little rest!"—not he!

(Caution redoubled,

Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly!)

Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,

Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure

Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,

(He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear

Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success

Found, or earth's failure:

"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes.

"Hence with 'life's pale lure!"

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,
 His hundred's soon hit:
 This high man, aiming at a millicn,
 Misses an unit. •
 That, has the world here—should he need the next,
 Let the world mind him!
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
 Seeking shall find him.
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife.
 Ground he at grammar;
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
 While he could stammer
 He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
 Properly based *Oun*—
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
 Dead from the waist down.
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:
 Hail to your purlieus,
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
 Swallows and curlews!
 Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
 Live, for they can, there:
 This man decided not to Live but Know—
 Bury this man there?
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds
 form,
 Lightnings are loosened,
 Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
 Peace let the dew send!
 Lofty designs must close in like effects:
 Loftily lying,
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects.
 Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

I

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:
 He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
 See him no other than as he is!
 Give both the infinitudes their due—
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
 As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ: plagal-cadence.*]

As infinite a justice too.

II.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,

What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin:
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
 They bring him now to be burned alive.

*[And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye
 shall say to confirm him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;
 'T'wixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
 Make a trench all round with the city muck;
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
 Faggots not few, blocks great and small,
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
 Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
 Is burning alive in Paris square!
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round?
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?
 —Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*]

VI.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk;
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
 (*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)
 Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
 "I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me!
 "See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
 "Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, "Save thou me!"

VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
 —Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
 Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird—
 For she too prattles of ugly names.

—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows?
 That God is good and the rest is breath;
 Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?
 Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
 Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:
 Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily on!)
 Their tree struck root in devil's dung.
 When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
 And of temperance and of judgment to come,
 Good Felix trembled, he could no less:
 John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

IX.

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose
 To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
 Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays uncloze;
 Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;
 And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;
 And lo, he is horribly in the toils
 Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

X.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—
To the Person, he bought and sold again—
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
Feature by feature It took its place:
And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,
At the steady whole of the Judge's face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

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